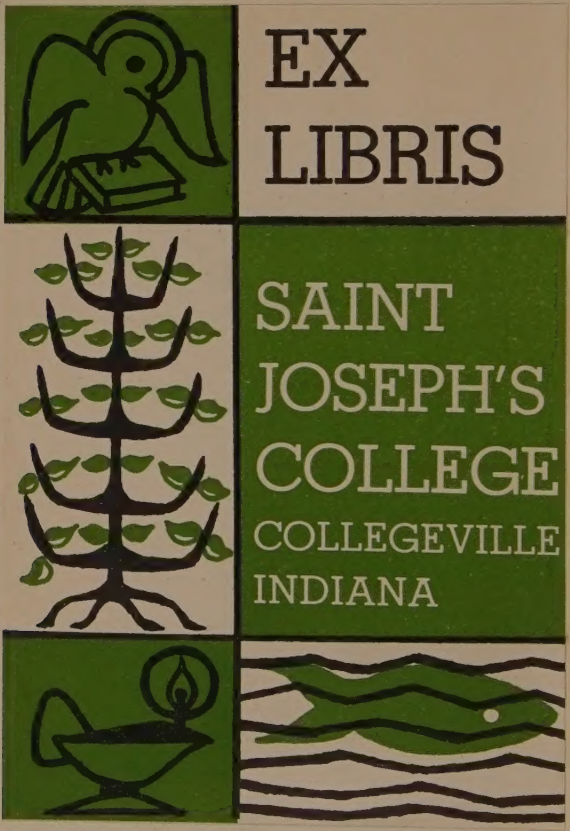
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VOL. I.

THE SEARCH AFTER PROSERPINE

AND OTHER POEMS

CLASSICAL AND MEDITATIVE

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next page

LONDON
EGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1884

THE

EARCH AFTER PROSERPINE

AND OTHER POEMS

CLASSICAL AND MEDITATIVE

3/5

BY

AUBREY DE VERE

NEW EDITION

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EGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1884

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THE SEARCH AFTER PROSERPINE.

A MASQUE.

TO

SIR HENRY TAYLOR, K.C.M.G.,

THIS POEM

IS AGAIN DEDICATED

BY HIS FRIEND,

AUBREY DE VERE.

INTRODUCTION.

all the beautiful fictions of Greek Mythology. ere are few more exquisite than the story of Proerpine, and none deeper in symbolical meaning. onsidering the fable with reference to the physical orld, Bacon says, in his 'Wisdom of the Ancients,' at by the Rape of Proserpine is signified the disppearance of flowers at the end of the year, when e vital juices are, as it were, drawn down to the ntral darkness, and held there in bondage. Following up this view of the subject, the Search of r Mother, sad and unavailing as it was, would em no fit emblem of Autumn and the restless elancholy of the season; while the hope with which e Goddess was finally cheered may perhaps remind s of that unexpected return of fine weather which ccurs so frequently, like an omen of Spring, just efore Winter closes in. The fable has, however, s moral significance also, being connected with at great mystery of Joy and Grief, of Life and eath, which pressed so heavily on the mind of

Pagan Greece, and imparts to the whole of her mythology a profound interest, spiritual as well as philosophical. It was the restoration of Man, not of flowers—the victory over Death, not over Winter—with which that high Intelligence felt itself to be really concerned. The hidden spiritual significance of Greek legendary lore, without which it would scarcely be a theme worthy of Poetry, will be found illustrated in one of the following poems entitled "Lines written under Delphi."

THE SEARCH AFTER PROSERPINE.

SCENE I.

IN SICILY.

Ceres, Fountain Nymphs.

CERES.

1.

THROUGH every region I have sought her;
Each shore has answered back my moan.
As Summer slides from zone to zone,
Winding Earth's beauty in his own,
Thus, seeking thee, my long lost daughter,
I wander ever, sad and lone.
Empty in Heaven my throne remains;
Unblest expand my harvest plains.

2.

I've searched the deep Sicilian meads,
And sacred Latium, where of yore
Saturn hid his forehead hoar:
I've sought her by the Alphean reeds:
Where solitary Cyclops squanders
On the unlistening oleanders
Vain song that makes the sea-wells quiver,
I've sought my child, and seek for ever.

3.

By Cretan lawns and vales oak-sprinkled,
By sands of Libya, brown and wrinkled,
And where for leagues, o'er Nile, is borne
The murmur of the yellowing corn,
And where o'er Ida's sea-like plain
White waving harvests mock the main,
Past Taurus, and past Caucasus,
Have I been vainly wandering thus;
In vain the Heavens my absence mourn,
And Iris' self in vain is faint
With wafting down their old complaint:
O'er earth, unresting though outworn,
I roam for aye, a shape forlorn!
Hark, hark, they sing—

FOUNTAIN NYMPHS.

1.

Proserpina was playing
In the soft Sicilian clime,
'Mid a thousand damsels maying,
All budding to their prime:
From their regions azure-blazing
The Immortal Concourse gazing
Bent down, and sought in vain
Another earthly shape so meet with them to reign.

2.

The steep blue arch above her,
In Jove's own smiles arrayed,
Shone mild, and seemed to love her:
His steeds Apollo stayed:

Soon as the God espied her
Nought else he saw beside her,
Though in that happy clime
A thousand maids were verging to the fulness of their prime.

3.

Old venerable Ocean
Against the meads uprolled
With ever-young emotion
His tides of blue and gold:
He had called with pomp and pæan
From his well-beloved Ægean
All billows to one shore,
To fawn around her footsteps and in murmurs to adore.

4.

Proserpina was playing
Sicilian flowers among;
Amid the tall flowers straying.
Alas! she strayed too long!
Sometimes she bent and kissed them,
Sometimes her hands caressed them,
And sometimes, one by one,
She gathered them and tenderly enclosed them in her zone.

5.

Lay upon your lips your fingers—
Ceres comes, and full of woe;
Sad she comes, and often lingers:
Well that grief divine I know:
Lay upon your lips your fingers;

Crush not, as you run, the grass;
Let the little bells of glass
On the fountain blinking
Burst, but ring not till she pass,
Down in silence sinking.
By the green scarf arching o'er her,
By her mantle yellow-pale,
By those blue weeds bent before her,
Bent as in a gale,
Well I know her—hush, descend—
Hither her green-tracked footsteps wend.

CERES.

Fair nymphs! whose music o'er the meadows gliding
Hath been your gentle herald, and for me
A guide obsequious to this spot—fair nymphs!
Fair graceful nymphs, my daughter's sweet companions,
Say, say but where she dwells; asking from me,
In turn, what boon you will.

NYMPHS.

Alas, we know not!

CERES.

May the pure ripple of your founts for ever
Leap up, unsoiled, against their verdurous banks;
May your fresh kisses ripple up as lightly,
As softly, and with undiscovering noise,
Against the embowering arms of prisoning lovers,
Shadowing those crystal bowers.

NYMPHS.

We have no lovers.

CERES.

To, and need none. Alas, Proserpina,
Thou wert as these! so innocent no fountain,
For half so gay; no flower so light, so fair.
Ah, fair mild Nymphs, my daughter's sweet companions!
May Jove, as ye run by, make blind the eyes
Of Wood-gods and the Fauns; in matted ivy
Tangle their beards; catch them in sudden clefts
Of deep-mossed stems, till ye have glided by—
But tell me where she dwells.

NYMPHS.

Goddess! we know not.

CERES.

Tell me then how ye lost her.

NYMPHS.

We were playing,
After our caverned sleep, which the high Gods
Sent us while Phœbus flamed too near the earth:
We played, like summer bees involved, and sang;
Some combing pearls from sandy slopes, some blowing
In shells, or lily-tubes our watery conchs;
When suddenly rolled forth long thunder peals
Far, far below. Earth shook; trembling we sank
Into our beds, amazed: when up we floated
A divine darkness hovered o'er the earth,
And from that moment we have had no flowers;
No flower since then in flower-famed Sicily!
And we no more behold Proserpina,
That played with us so sweetly. We have made

A melody that tells of her, and sing it,
Lest we should grieve.

CERES.

Yes, I have heard your song.
Still the same tale—the words themselves unchanged
—Know you no more?

NYMPHS.

Goddess, not wide our knowledge!
Phœbus cares nought for Nymphs, lonely flower-bathers;
Nor other prophet see we. Yet of late
Our vales are flushed with new strange visitants;
Their tumult ofttimes, as the sun descends,
Shakes us within our lily-paved pavilions;
And when we look abroad along the marge,
The inland vales, shaggy with pine and ilex,
That catch like nets those boy-nymphs, the light Zephyrs,
Are filled with riot. From all sides they rush,
Mad Gods, with russet brows the west outfacing,
And wands tossed high: in songs the lawns are drowned.
Help us, great Jove! Fair Goddess, once it chanced
As this red festival came reeling by,
Over the fount in which trembling we lay,
Some Wood-god crushed a wreath of poisonous berries,
Laughing; and our bright home all crimson grew,
So that we wept. I pray you, gentle Goddess,
Protect us from these Gods.

CERES.

Ha! Bacchus here!
I thought my little late-born enemy

Lay hid in Hellas—What, and merry grown,
With revellers! then haply he hath stolen
My beauteous child. Mild nymphs, my child's companions!
Mild, silver-footed nymphs with silver songs!
Where dwell those Wood-gods when they come not hither?

NYMPHS.

At Naxos, Fame reports; an unblessed isle.

CERES.

Farewell, sweet nymphs—from them, and from all perils
May Jove defend you well! I seek those Gods,
And I will pray them that they hurt you not.

NYMPHS.

First Semichorus.

Without aid of plumes
Light-footing the sea brine,
The dimness she illumes
Of evening's gray decline;
The wild streams, proud to waft her,
In dappled purple glide,
With a shadowed green track after,
And a sunny green beside.

Second Semichorus.

Down, nymphs, into the waters!
The air is dense with sighs,
The earth is red with slaughters;
Down, down, and seldom rise!

Our crystal dome above us,
And the star-dome yet more high,
Nor care nor pain can move us
While here we laugh and lie!

SCENE II.

NAXOS.

Ceres, Wood-gods.

CERES.

A Bacchic wood! the pine stems and old oaks
Are swathed with crimson under their green shadows!
A wilderness of wood! within its depths
Armies of men might lurk. Above the trees
A gloom voluptuous undulates and hovers
Like a dark fleece of wind-dewed gossamer.
The caverns, as I pass them, mildly breathe
A colder current of wine-scented air
Into my face. Ha, ha,—a tiger's roar!
And now a din of resonant wild laughter
That makes the forest like a reed-pipe ring.
The very beasts have caught the infectious madness,
And ramp, with sport irreverent, on high Gods.
Down, leopard, down—ha, myriad-mooned panther,
Away! 'tis well for you this almond branch
Is sheathed in flowers Sicilia feeds no more;
That cry had else been louder. Hark, they come!

FAUNS AND WOOD-GODS.

First Strophe.

Hold, hold the vine-wreathed goblet up,
Where lies the fierce wine darkling;

Now Bacchus leaps from out the cup:
See, see his black eyes sparkling!
Hark, how the bubbles upward throw
A low song and soft coiling;
'Tis Bacchus' self that laughs below,
To keep his red fount boiling!

First Antistrophe.

Great Bacchus with his conquering hands
Upraised the far-sought treasure
Of all the oceans, all the lands,
Afloat in one wild pleasure.
Lo! how it plunges, rolls, and sweeps!
Great Bacchus bathes beneath it;
What odour from the eddy leaps!
Great Bacchus' self doth breathe it.

Second Strophe.

Through us he rises from the ground;
These sharp-leaved chaplets draw him
Into our tresses ivy-crowned:
In purple flames I saw him!
Lift every thyrsus high and higher;
While round and round ye wind them,
Great Bacchus turns the air to fire,
Wide crowns of fire behind them!

Second Antistrophe.

Drink, drink to Bacchus, every limb
With wine will soon be glowing:
He drinks to those who drink to him,
Himself on all bestowing.
Into the hearts of all his wards
He pours, like streams from Pindus,

The strength and speed of all the pards
That rolled his car by Indus!

CERES.

O Fauns and Satyrs of the merry forests!
Sharp-hoofed, long-horned, nymph-dreaded deities!
Grant me this hour your aid! Secrets I know
Of herbs grass-hidden and medicinal blooms
Whereof one leaf, into your cups distilled,
Would make them rise into a fount of foam
Wide as the broad arch of yon flowering myrtle:
Those secrets shall be yours—only restore me
My infant child.

FAUNS.

O venerable Goddess!
Large-browed, large-eyed, presence august and holy!
In our green forests dwells no infant child.

CERES.

But she is now in truth no infant child
As when I laid her 'mid the sacred flowers
Of Sicily, with Nymphs for her young nurses
And tender playmates.

FAUNS.

Venerable Goddess!
No child have we beheld, nor ever shall,
With mien like thine.

CERES.

Ah! she was not like me!
I was her mother; but like her no more
Than the dark ground is like some flower star-bright,
That from it springs, and o'er it waves in beauty!

FAUNS.

n Sicily you lost her?

CERES.

Wood-gods, yes.

FIRST FAUN.

And I remember now in that soft isle
Such creature we beheld as you have lost,
Upon a vernal bank she sat alone
Among the aërial mounds and honeyed meadows;
Wearied she seemed, yet smiled in weariness,
And, as a garden, was with bright flowers crowned;
Many she held upon her lap, and many
Fell down about her feet; her feet gleamed through
them.
Strange fear, albeit to fear unused, we felt,
And, beckoning to each other, slow retired.
Since then in vain we seek her.

CERES.

Woodland Gods!
Was she not fair?

SECOND FAUN.

So fair that on the earth
Is left no longer any shape of beauty.
Well spake you, calling her your infant child.
Such light was on her brow—within her eyes
Such gleam immediate of celestial gladness,
A child she seemed, by that inspiring clime
Divinely ripened in one summer day
To full perfection of virginal beauty.
Not far the playmate nymphs their wild hymns sang,

Like birds new-touched by the enamouring season:
While we went back, dreading the wrath of Jove.

CERES.

Since she is lost those songs are heard no more.
In vain the sea-worn mariners suspend
Long time their oars amid the drifting spray;
In vain the home-bound shepherds pause and listen;
Nor any flower is seen.

FAUNS.

Maternal Goddess!
Still in one spot lingers a wreath of flowers.

CERES.

'Tis strange—those flowers, where are they?

FAUNS.

At the entrance
Of a long glen, that sinks in dimness down
From the proud pastures arched along the sea.

CERES.

Ha, Woodland Gods! that was her place of play;
A haunt unknown to men.

FAUNS.

Hark, hark, 'tis Bacchus!

CERES.

But tell me, Gods——

FAUNS.

We thirst, we thirst for wine;
Give, give us wine, and we will stay with you;
Roll it in deep floods forth, from cleft and cavern

CERES.

ay, Wood-gods, stay!

FAUNS.

Ha, ha, that laugh; 'tis Bacchus!
(*They rush past singing.*)

First Strophe.

Hour by hour the vines are growing
Over pine and over rock,
The blood, like fire within them flowing,
With bounding pulse and merry shock
Each light bough uplifts and pushes
Till the loftiest ridge it brushes.

First Antistrophe.

Hour by hour great Bacchus nurses
The wide wreaths of his anadem;
In him they meet, and he disperses
Himself o'er all the world in them:
The mountains of all seas and lands,
He grasps them in his thousand hands.

Second Strophe.

The gums from yonder pine-boughs dropping
Like fire-lit jewels darkly shine;
The ivy-wreaths yon goat is cropping
Are drenched in mist of purple wine.
The Vine, a honey-venomed snake,
Hath bit and swollen each brier and brake.

Second Antistrophe.

The forest burgeons giant-flowers
As on this generous food it feeds;

Warming its roots in crimson showers
That bead the earth with Bacchic seeds:
A sacred wood: his house of mirth
The God that conquers all the earth!

Epode.

The carpets of those halls of joyaunce
Uplift us with so fierce a spring,
That we, to balance that upbuoyaunce,
Deep draught on draught are forced to fling.
Hark, hark, his laugh! we cannot stay;
Blue skies, farewell! away, away!

CERES.

To Sicily once more. Lo! how these vines
Have grown about me! never infant yet
Tangled like this young Bacchus his embraces;
Not one upon the earth! another year,
And half my kingdom he'll have won from me
As Hermes robbed Apollo of his herd.
No feastful, sunlit mound, or yellow hill,
Will sing, at evening, anthems unto me;
No shelving corn-field on the mountain-slope
Make westering Phœbus, while askance he peers
Down through the pale stems, green with jealousy.
Parnassian weed, away! ah, lost Proserpina!
Thou, thou wert as my flowers—unsought for mine,
And then, once mine, more dear than all my wealth!
The Gods, in their Olympian mansions, know
Nothing of grief: children they too have lost;
But never mourned as I have. Surely I
Have caught from Earth some portion of her sadness,
And heart maternal of Humanity.

› Sicily once more. O fair Sicilia!
ıose flowers they saw, whence came they, and what
mean they?
ıat must my search discover; I must see them;
hen I behold them I shall see once more
hat I in vain desire—my child's fair eyes.
›wn, vine-wreaths, down! I break from you away.

SCENE III.

SICILIAN SEA.

(*Nereids sing.*)

Strophe.

Far off the storms were dying;
The Sea-nymphs and Sea-gods
On new-lulled billows lying,
With tridents and pearl-rods:
Upon their sliding thrones
And beds of waving waters
Reclined august, old Ocean's sons,
And the choir of his foam-white daughters.

Antistrophe.

Into their deep conchs blowing,
They smoothed the scowling waves,
And the great sea-music forth flowing
Was echoed in glassy caves.
There was no sound but song
Save now and then far under,
When an ocean monster streamed along
With a roll of Ocean's thunder.

Epode.

Then Iris, lightly dropping,
Leaped from her cloudy screen,
And lit on a wave down-sloping
In floods of crimson-green:
A moment its neck she trod,
And cried, 'The Gods of Heaven
Are coming to feast with the Ocean-God,
So Jove has sworn, this even.'

GLAUCE.

Fair Sisters, ocean-cradled, wave-revered!
Holds not this evening well the morning's pledge?
Salt gust no more; nor airy arc, down-showering
Into the dim green, rain of sunny gems
Or crowns celestial; crystal chasm no more
By harsh winds crushed to murmuring foam abysses;
But, wide o'er all, a plenitude of light
Serene as that which sits on Jove's great brow;
And breeze as equable as Juno's breath.

AUTONOE.

And, Sisters, mark! along yon opal Heaven,
And sea of agate and chalcedony
The promised pageant spreads. We shall behold
The mighty head of Jove, rich-tressed, supreme,
Sacred and strong and fair and venerable,
With golden sceptre and obedient eagle:
And we shall gaze on Juno's large mild eyes,
And the sea-born Queen of Beauty, her who runs
Over the swelling hearts of Gods and men
As Thetis glides over the ocean waves;
And, dearer still to us, the graceful form

[Hebe, solitary nymph of Heaven,
lone among the Gods and yet not lonely.
ıns Iris spake.

EUDORA.

Fair Iris! dropped she then
his morn from Heaven, her ocean spoils to gather?
knew it not, for on the Libyan sands
ll day I rolled a great smooth shell, too great
) clasp or carry: but my tears are past,
ince we shall gaze upon high Gods.

GLAUCE.

Lo, there!
low the red west inflames the deep! Methinks
hat merry God, conqueror of many a land,
His banners over ocean too is waving;
o Britain will he drive us, end of earth?
ee, I have dropped my bracelet!

AUTONOE.

Over ocean
hat God advances; dark-rimmed Naxian shores
lready with his tendril nets are swathed,
ea and the Naxian billows; all day long
Ve toss them backward from our foam-white bosoms,
nd beds of billows, to their beds of sand.

EUDORA.

nd maids of earth he mocks at worse than us.
ast eve, by yonder meadow I was floating,
illowing my cheek upon a sleepy wave,
nd hearkening to an inland pipe remote,
hen suddenly the purpled shore resounded
ith tumult harsh; and concourse I beheld

Of Wood-gods on the sands, leaping and laughing!
And why? because a gentle maid of earth
That with her mortal playmate had been straying,
Beneath the bank, oppressed perhaps with sleep,
(Who knows? I know not), when she thought not of it,
In vine-nets prisoned lay: The Wood-gods mocked!
Bacchus such puissance hath—

GLAUCE.

How wretched those
That dwell on Earth! alas, I pity them!
On that rough, heavy, element opaque
What lovely light can glimmer? None can tell
Wherefore the high Gods shaped the hump-backed Earth!

EUDORA.

Nay, Sister, when the forests slant as now
From the round mountains to the wine-black sea,
And Phœbus on their gold and vermeil roof
Looks brightly, while the winds rush under them,
Then hath the Earth her beauty—yea, a gleam
Like our Autonoe, when her sun-loved tresses
Upon a green rock loosening she flings forth,
Laughing, into some monster's briny eyes.

AUTONOE.

You speak well, Sister, courteous like the Gods;
And blossoming fruit-trees, spangled with sea spray,
Are fair indeed at sunrise: Earth hath gleams,
As Nubian slaves their gems; yet how forlorn
And like a slave's her downcast countenance!
Her hues are not like ocean's, coloured lights,
But coloured shades, dim shadows painted o'er;

a and the motions of her trees and harvests
esemble those of slaves, reluctant, slow,
outward force compelled; not like our billows,
ringing elastic in impetuous joy,
indolently swayed.

EUDORA.

Not less o'erawed
re those that dwell on Earth, harsh-speaking
Mortals.
ne eve, it chanced, into a glen I wandered,
garb a boy: unwonted weight I felt;
he shades moved not; dull odours thronged the air:
p from the ground a dense, blunt sound was rushing:
ll creatures ranged, as though beneath their feet
own to earth's centre chains unseen were hung,
nd languid browsed as from necessity,
ot joy, their faint sighs leaving on the grass.
il things were sad; sadly I wandered on
o where there lay a something large and black,
nd panting; some Immortal deeming it,
Vith reverence I was passing, when, behold!
Iard by there stood a company of Mortals,
Vailing; and myrrh on myrrh, and oil on oil,
)'er it in grief they flung; it was a pyre.
Iomeward I turned abashed, and weeping much
For Man's unhappy race, so fair, yet sad,
By Jove's great wrath oppressed and shame of death.
Yes, and weep still; for know you, gentle Sisters,
Though Gods themselves should dwell upon the
Earth,
Grief they must feel; the affliction men call love,
Or hunger, or the grave.

AUTONOE.

Down, Sisters, down!
In sorrow footing the bright ocean-way
I see that form half human, all divine:
'Tis Ceres; plunge we down! No nymph she loves
Save her child's mates.

GLAUCE.

Yea, and of those is jealous.

SCENE IV.

THE SICILIAN SHORE.

Ceres, Fountain Nymphs.

CERES.

Inconstant waves, farewell: I love you not:
Earth, I salute thee, fruitful, though in sorrow.
Still on! my search, though vain, is all my rest.
One flower of hers, to this sad bosom folded,
Will give it back its old Olympian calm.
The nymphs sing low: O for thy songs, Proserpine,
That woke the ice-bound streams, while old boughs leaped,
Though dead, into the glory of fresh blossoms!

(*Fountain Nymphs sing.*)

1.

Proserpina was lying
Against her ebon throne;
Alternating long sighing
With a shudder and a moan:

The dull Lethean river,
Whose breath the nightshade breeds,
Went toiling on for ever
Through the forest of its reeds:
'O mother, I was playing
'Mid the soft Sicilian air—
Forever must I languish
In this empire of Despair!'

2.

With wide and sable gleaming,
In chains decreed of old,
Through gray morasses streaming,
That ancient river rolled:
The hemlock borders under
Drave the voluminous flood,
With a low, soft, sleepy thunder
That thrilled the stagnant blood:
'O mother, I was playing
'Mid the soft Sicilian air—
Forever must I languish
In this empire of Despair!'

3.

No bird was there to warble,
The wind was void of sound;
Vast caves of jet-black marble
Were yawning all around;
No placid Heaven, blue-tented,
Its dome above her spread;
Like clouds the Souls tormented
Were drifting overhead:

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'O mother I was playing
'Mid the soft Sicilian air—
Forever must I languish
In this empire of Despair!'

4.

Darkness but faintly chequered
Possessed that region dim,
Save one white cloud that flickered
Above the horizon's rim;
Under the dreary lustre
It cast in flakes and showers
Up rose afar the cluster
Of Pluto's palace towers:
'O mother, I was playing
'Mid the soft Sicilian air—
Forever must I languish
In this empire of Despair!'

5.

Proserpina for ever
Thereon her large eyes kept.
While gusts from that cold river
Her tresses backward swept;
Ever in sadness lying
Against her ebon throne,
With her melancholy sighing
Half smothered in a moan:
'O mother, I was playing
'Mid the soft Sicilian air—
Must I languish here forever
In this empire of Despair!'

CERES.

O Nymphs, where found you that despondent song?
And why this funeral chime? She is immortal.

NYMPHS.

Immortal truly, venerable Goddess!
And yet in Erebus she dwells; and plays
No more; no flowers to play with finds she there.

CERES.

How know you this?

NYMPHS.

Last eve we wandered forth,
By fugitive rainbows lured and rain-washed grass,
To that deep valley where we lost our playmate:
And for the first time past it. In one spot
We found, with joy astonished, crowds of flowers;
Flowers of all kinds, each larger than its kind,
And brighter; wandering here and there among them,
Behold two mighty chariot tracks! deep fissures,
Burning and black, to where the opposing bank
Locked in and barred the vale: the rocks were split;
Dull vapours hovering o'er them. In a moment
The truth flashed on us, and we heard, yea felt
Once more, that subterraneous thunder roll.
The King of Darkness, Monarch sole below,
Looked up and saw thy child, and thirsted for her;
And snatched her to his shades:—In Erebus
Thy daughter dwells.

CERES.

No song, no fable this!
Ah flower! pure lily among the unfruitful shades!
White lonely lamp of all the Elysian darkness!

Ah child! the daughter of an unblest fate,
Thou hast no Mother now: thou hast forgotten
That e'er thou hadst a Mother—Woe, woe, woe!
The imperial diadem doth mock that brow,
The sceptre doth subdue that little hand
More than the Shades, thy subjects! Gentle Nymphs,
Let me behold that spot.

FIRST NYMPH.

With slow, sad foot
(On gray autumnal eves, the Nymphs themselves
With slow, sad foot, o'er the dim grass steal on)
Advance; no bounding step, fair sister Nymphs;
No bounding step, or jubilant, reckless song.
Lo, there the gleam! a breeze, a sigh divine
Is ever sweeping o'er those tremulous flowers!
Troubling their dews that fall not, held, like tears
In melancholy eyes—O fair, fair flowers!
Ye, as she dropped you, instantly took root,
And fade not ever. Immortality
Ye caught from the last pressure of those hands;
Immortal were ye though the world should die.

NYMPHS.

First Semichorus.

Looks divine, divinely chastened,
Sad eyes, on the saddened ground
As by spells eternal fastened,
Folded hands, and locks unbound!
Deeper, every moment deeper,
Pierce those eyes her daughter's shroud;
The earth to this immortal weeper
Grows half transparent as a cloud;

And her ears even now are ringing
With old Lethe's mournful singing.

Second Semichorus.

But see, on high the blue is riven!
That radiance! Hermes it must be!
Around him smiles the flattered Heaven;
No Apollonian flight hath he
Right onward, nor the stormy wrath
On Jove's great Eagle earthward rushing,
But winds along in serpent path
Through maiden airs around him flushing,
With wingèd feet and rod upholden,
Enwreathed with mild Persuasions golden.

HERMES.

Hermes, mild herald of the Gods, I come,
Bearing the grace of Jove, upon my lips
Distilled—high kiss of heavenly benediction.
Goddess to Mortals and Immortals dear,
Be of good cheer: Proserpina, beloved
Of all the blest Olympians, sceptred sits
In Tartarus; sole pride of him that sways
The world heroic of Departed Souls;
A child although a Queen; and, though a spouse,
Yet virgin ever; tempering the deep heart
Of Pluto, and to all the Shades as dear
As Dian to the night, or to the waves
The foam-dividing star of Aphrodite.
Sacred and well beloved—a Mystery—
Fares she not well? Maternal Goddess! raise
The large dejected orbs of thy fair eyes,
And gaze on him upon whose brow doth meet

The light of all the Gods giving command:
Look up and speak!

CERES.

Mild herald Mercury!
Thy voice is in mine ears; winged and sweet
Ever its tones; brightening all hearts, like Heaven
When Jove looks up: but now, unwonted softness
Melts through their pauses. Dost thou pity me?
Then herald God, auspicious guide of Shades,
Mighty art thou in the Unbeloved Abode;
Restore, restore my child!

HERMES.

Not comfort only,
Deep-bosomed Goddess, grave, and dulcet-voiced,
But aid I bear: and need there is of both.
Alone she sits beyond the utmost bound
Of laughter from the Gods, or shaft Phœbean,
And thou art justly restless for thine own.
Hear then the ordinance of Jove; descend!
You rock shall like a billow arch thy way;
Descend into the Stygian waste; behold
Once more thy tender daughter face to face;
Kiss her once more, once more upon thy knee
And in thine arms possess her. This is much:
Yet more: if seed not yet of flower or fruit
Unblessed have touched her lips, henceforth and ever
With thee she dwells in sweet society.
Descend! the Will of Jove, before thee running,
Makes smooth thy path, and the Caducean charm
Waved from this wand, around thy feet shall beckon
A quire of bright Immortals fit to grace
The steps of a departing Deity.

Ethereal Seasons! from the snowy clouds,
Your ambient nests on cold autumnal days,
Hover once more about this spot; and ye
Gift-feathered Hours, at Heaven's wide gate for ever
On broad and billowy wing suspense, the cord
Aerial, that detains you, bursting, fly
With unreverting faces to the earth,
And breathe a sudden spring on valley and plain:
And ye, infantine Zephyrs, on whose lips
The Gods have breathed; thou too, delight of Heaven,
Iris! descend; and o'er the shadowy glen
Thy many-coloured scarf from both thy hands
Fling wide, and cast the brightest of thy smiles
Upon the head of this descending Power.

FIRST NYMPH.

Behold! into the chasm she walks.

SECOND NYMPH.

But lo!
How rich a splendour burns on yonder bank!
The trees grow lustrous as Apollo's locks;
Between the arch of yon suspended bow
And the green hollow, flows a low deep music,
With light songs o'er it playing in wantonness:
Hark, hark, once more.

(*The Hours sing.*)

Strophe.

A beam on Earth's chill bosom
Falls pointed 'mid her sleep;
And leaf and bud and blossom
Up from their dull trance leap:

That beam at Earth's dim centre
Hath found the mailèd Winter,
And touched his snow-cold lips;
Upon his breast that beam doth rest
And frost-bound finger tips.

Antistrophe.

From deep grass gently heaving
Quick flowers in myriads rise,
A wreath for Winter weaving;
It falls below his eyes!
His old gray beard it covers
Like locks of mirthful lovers;
It makes him laugh with pride,
As he a youth had grown in sooth
And found a youthful Bride.

(*The Zephyrs sing.*)

Strophe.

The bright-lipped waters troubling
Of the pure Olympian springs,
We caught the airs up-bubbling,
And stayed them with our wings;
From the beginning sealed
Like sweet thoughts unrevealed
Those airs till then lay hid;
Like odours barred in buds yet hard
Or the eye beneath the lid.

Antistrophe.

Our pinions mildly swaying
With an undulating grace
We bid those airs go playing
Over Earth's beaming face:

On the laurel banks new-flowered,
On the ridge of pine dew-showered,
On every leaf and blade
That leaps on wings and all but sings
In sunshine or in shade!

(*Hours and Zephyrs sing together.*)

Strophe.

Over the olives hovering,
Brushing the myrtle bowers,
Dark ground with blossoms covering,
The Zephyrs and the Hours,
With laugh and gentle mocking
We play, the green boughs rocking,
Above each other rolled
From laurel leaf to laurel leaf,
That sing like tongues of gold!

Antistrophe.

Now like birds fast flitting
On from bough to bough,
Like bees in sunshine knitting
Murmuring mazes now:
Parting oft—oft blending
And for ever sending
Spangled showers around,
With eddying streams of scents and gleams,
And deep Olympian sound.

(*Sicilian Nymphs singing.*)

First Strophe.

Numbers softer than our own
And in happier circle running

Like Flora's crown or Venus' zone
They are braiding in their cunning.
All the God-thronged air is glowing
With a ferment of delight,
All the flowers in rapture blowing
Every moment swell more bright,
And higher round the pale stems clamber
In vermilion wreaths or amber.

First Antistrophe.

Half in terror, half in pleasure,
Little birds on warm boughs waking
Launch abroad a rival measure,
Floral births with songs o'ertaking:
O'er the shadows little lights,
And o'er little lights a shadow
Bound along like gamesome sprites
On the green waves of the meadow;
And new streams are up and boiling,
And new insects round them coiling.

Second Strophe.

On one side a cedarn alley,
On the other a myrrh brake,
Downward streams the mystic valley,
As flushed rivers their path take
By hills their devious waters curbing;
Airs ambrosial forth are swung
From boughs their crimson fruitage orbing
Iris, borne those airs among,
Flings o'er the dim wildernesses
Her illumed dishevelled tresses.

Second Antistrophe.

Through a mist of sunny rays
Gleam bright eyes and pinions shiver;
O'er the mountain's breast of bays
Panting dew-gems bask and quiver;
All the Gods with silent greeting
In this sumptuous harbour met
Make the palace of their meeting
Rich as Juno's cabinet,
Golden-domed and golden-gated,
With sacred pleasures never sated.

Hush—wild song, no more!
Nor dance of lyric lightness—
A shadow from the shore
Steals, and blots the brightness.
Like children tired of play
The splendours melt away:
Trips by each elf—mark! Iris' self
Dissolves in waning whiteness.

IRIS.

I have but leaped from out my airy lustres
To plant my white foot palpably on Earth.
Fair nymphs, this shadow soon, too soon, will reach
The front now bright of that descended Goddess.
Her lost one she hath found—alas, too late:
Seeds of a Stygian fruit have passed her lips!
Three fatal seeds! Proserpina hath sucked
Into her being the dark element.
And yet lament not! Ceres' self shall learn
Comfort and divine solace from her child,
What the Gods could not give, her child, though sad,
Yet fraught with sweetness of Elysian wisdom,

Bestows upon the Mother. From this hour
Let every mortal Mother that hath given
A child from her own heart into the Shades,
Live and take comfort; they shall meet again.
Let every mourner in the Past who buries
An innocent delight, be sure henceforth
That in the Future, a large treasure-house,
It doth await him. Gentle Nymphs, weep not;
Those parted lips, those smooth and candid brows
Were not for mourners fashioned, sigh or shadow,
But for pure breathing of celestial airs,
And gracing a light garland.

NYMPHS.

Mild-eyed Goddess!
Must we no more behold Proserpina?
Must flower-famed Sicily have no more flowers?

IRIS.

I see the end, and therefore I am glad;
I, that look down into the smallest dewdrop,
Yet in my bright arch clasp the end of all:
And, whether I descend, the adorned cradle
Of some young flower to rock, or fatally
To cut the locks of some expiring King,
My task is kind, and Comforter my name.
Fear nought; Proserpina shall rise once more;
For Jove is clement, and a Mother's prayers
Ofttimes of fateful power against the Fates.
One half the year in darkness dwells she throned,
A Queen; one half she plays, a child on Earth,
Flower-crowned, and constant 'mid inconstancy,
Whether Narcissus now, or Daffodil
Her choice persuade; or mysteries in the cups

Of Cowslips through thick honey scarce espied.
Or Primroses moon-lighted all day long,
Or fabled Pansy, or Anemone
Wind-chidden, or the red all-conquering Rose,
Enchain her youthful heart—or other flowers,
Named on the Earth but nameless still in Heaven,
Subdue her, each in turn or all at once.
Mild Nymphs, farewell! To Juno, large-eyed Queen,
Whose Herald fair I boast myself, once more
I speed

(*Nymphs descend, singing.*)

Strophe.

Proserpina once more
Will come to us a-Maying;
Sicilian meadows o'er
Low-singing and light-playing.
The wintry durance past,
Delight will come at last:
Proserpina will come to us—
Will come to us a-Maying.

Antistrophe.

Sullen skies to-day,
Sunny skies to-morrow;
November steals from May,
And May from her doth borrow:
Griefs—Joys—in Time's strange dance
Interchangeably advance;
The sweetest joys that come to us
Come sweeter for past sorrow.

RECOLLECTIONS OF GREECE,

AND OTHER POEMS.

To the Memory

OF

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

THESE RECOLLECTIONS OF GREECE

ARE DEDICATED.

STANZAS

WRITTEN WHILE SAILING DOWN THE ADRIATIC.

1.

By many an isle and forest peak
In darker purple gushing
The Adrian eddies stream and break.
And our light boat is rushing.
Warm airs from under a full moon
Against our foreheads pant,
And fan each bright and blue lagoon
Warm airs from the Levant.

2.

Our bark runs down the watery slope
With tremulous sail out-blown,
Like Love down banks half-flowered, or Hope
Warbling o'er fields new-sown.
Eager as youth or vernal prime,
As swift as darting swallows,
The omens of a milder clime
She scents far off, and follows!

3.

Ausonia yet stern Winter sways:
But Spring thus far hath flung
Her breath before her on the ways
Her feet shall tread ere long.
Even now vague smells of promised bowers
Float feebly o'er the shoals—
Thus softly float o'er Lethe's flowers
The body-waiting souls.

4.

Great Dian mocks her brother's beams
With light as wide though colder:
Not from her brow alone it streams,
But half her breast and shoulder!
Old Ocean laughs in dream, or wakes
In smiles to meet her glance;
No rock so dun but shines and shakes
Beneath her silver lance.

5.

On, winged bark, into the South!
If other breeze were none,
This music freshening from my mouth
Alone might waft thee on!
On, wild Swan, to the realms of light!
Though all thy plumes were rent,
Our rushing souls might wing thy flight
Into the Orient!

A NIGHT AT CORCYRA.

1.

A HOARY gleam through boughs prevailing
Tells me how near the ocean lies,
Here caged in many a waveless lake
By cypressed ridge and shadowy brake:
Far off the Nightingale is wailing:
More near the watery grot replies.

2.

The forest growths are rocked and dandled
By airs with midnight odours faint,
Soft, separate airs, o'er feather'd grass
That pass me often and repass,
Like naked feet of Nymphs unsandalled
That tread each lawn and alley quaint.

3.

No voice is heard of mortal creature!
No voice—yet I am not alone:
Nausicaa and her virgin train
Still haunt the woodland, skirt the main,
And deck for me with human feature
Each glimmering branch and white-browed stone.

4.

When with those Maids the Exile * sported,
The fire-flies lit, as now, the glen:
That rose its blush to-day which gave
And bosom to the aspiring wave,

* Ulysses.

Descends from one old Ocean courted,
On the same cliff it may be, then!

5.

I see not now those hills whose summits
In August keep their ermined robes;
But feel their freshness—know that round
They gird the steely gulfs profound
With feet that mock the seamen's plummets,
And foreheads crowned with starry globes.

6.

But see! vast beams divide the heaven;
The orange-groves their blossoms show;
Over yon kindling deep the moon
Will lash her snowy coursers soon:
Now, by her brow the East is riven!
And now the West returns the glow!

GRECIAN ODE.

1.

YES, yes, 'tis Greece! full many a fane
Around me gleams, as white
As when it gladdened cape or plain
The first time with its light;
And living choirs, far-eyed and virgin,
Once more through Time's old shade emerging,
With dew-brushed sandal and soft sound
Salute the dedicated ground.

2.

Each hill of asphodel and bays
Sufficient deems its height

If steep enough its arch to raise
A temple into light.
From cape to cape, across the deep
The 'winged Pines' in panic sweep—
Among their forest-sires so ran
Shy wood-nymphs in the days of Pan!

3.

In every bay the yearning billows
Swell up, as proud as when
White Nereids slid from purple pillows
Under old Homer's ken.
Above them still the Acacia throws
The warm shower of her sun-touched snows
Profusely as when Zephyr first
Deflowered the blooms himself had nursed.

4.

Those theatres the white cliffs gird,
Those hollows grey and wide,
With tamarisk feathered, and moss-furred,
Those blue rifts far descried,
Those sinuous streams that blushing wander
Through labyrinthine oleander,
Those crocus mounds, that wind-flower hill—
Hail ancient land! 'tis Hellas still!

5.

Range beyond range the mountains rise;
Smooth platform, and meet stage
If demi-gods for chariot prize
Fraternal strife should wage.

Glad clouds are launched along the wind,
As though each snowy tent enshrined
Olympian choirs borne lightly by
With sound of spheral melody.

6.

Beheld that goat yon rift beneath,
Eyeing those rocks pine-cloven!
Nor lacks yon mound its living wreath
Of goatherds dance-inwoven,
Now measuring forth with Attic grace
(Like figures round a sculptured vase)
The accent of some mythic song,
Now hurled, a Bacchic group, along.

7.

That old man 'neath the Palm who sits
Trolls loud a merry lay:
Round him as genial fancy flits
As when his month was May.
Still from the nectared air he quaffs
As happy health, as gaily laughs
As when he clomb yon breeze-swept hill,
And see, those maidens fly him still!

Yon mighty Ilex vast and grave
Flings far its restless shadow;
But through its trunk, a windowed cave,
Long lights divide the meadow:
Its roots all round like serpents creep.
And honey-dews its branches steep,
Thus beamed Dodona's oak afar
Fawn-haunted and oracular.

9.

What vale was that wherein the Nine
  Were used with Harmony to play?
Between the Juniper and Vine
  They roam each vale to-day!
What stream was that o'er which, flower-wreathed,
Her passion Aphrodité breathed?
Each lilied bank that stays each rill
From that wild breath is quivering still!

10.

Yon children chasing the wild bees
  Have lips as full and fair
As Plato had, or Sophocles,
  When bees sought honey there.
But song of bard or sage's lore
Those fields ennoble now no more:
It is not Greece—it must not be—
And yet, look up—the land is free!

11.

I gazed round Marathon. The plain
  In peaceful sunshine slept:
Eternal Sabbath there her reign
  Inviolably kept:
Is this the battle-field? I cried—
An Eagle from on high replied
With shade far cast and clangour shrill
'Yes, yes— 'tis Hellas, Hellas still!'

ODE TO THE PLANET MERCURY.

1.

In these dull, proud days
Few how few there be
Songs or eyes that raise,
Star of Joy, to thee!
Profane, our hearts we spend
On earthly loves and wars;
Or kindle factory fires, far-kenned
With beam as red as Mars.

2.

Not now the Poets soar
To Heaven, or tempt the seas:
On clouds and trees they pore;
Or men, dim-seen 'like trees,'
Through melting mists that loom
Of metaphysic dreams;—
Or bend in apathetic gloom
Over Lethean streams.

3.

Too fierce delights will come unbidden!
(Io Pæan, Io sing)
Too leaden thoughts are wisely chidden—
Such moods let Saturn bring.
Mirth is thine, and witching words
That thrill, not jar, our lute-strung hearts;
Devices sweet, and jocund chords,
And art of life—the art of arts!

4.

O'er the woodland promontory
I beheld thee rise alone,
Car divine, and Youth whose glory
Lit that argent throne.
Wingèd Helm I knew, and eyes
Smiling glance with glance pursuing—
They shine, not flash, with sweet surprise
Winning Earth ere wooing!

5.

Lo! that keen, exulting gladness
(Spite of Phœbus, Io sing)
Pierces all the heart of sadness
With bright, heavenly sting:
And preaches, he is wiser-witted
Who plays the wanton knave in jest,
Than those who live of joy self-cheated,
By false cares depressed.

6.

Hermes to his cavern hollow
(Io Pæan, Io sing)
Lured the bright herd of Apollo,
And mocked the Delphic King,
As, bending his great brow, he pondered
Why the Babe this feat had done:
From maze to maze the Augur wandered,
Nor guessed that—cause was none.

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7.

New-born he slipped through bowers of myrtle
(Io Pæan, Io sing),

And, circumventing, scooped a turtle,
And wrought with bridge and string.
O teach our kind, those wanderers slow
Who toil life's weary waste along,
Each clod of earth, thus touched, would grow
A fount of gladsome song!

8.

Jove's great sceptre thou hadst stolen:
(Io Pæan, Io sing)
With clouds the brow supreme was swollen,
Ruffled the Eagle's wing:
But thy winking shot bright weather
All the Olympian tempest round:
The grave-faced Eagle laughed: the Father
Thy locks with both hands crowned!

9.

Mocked hast thou the breast of Pallas
With a love-shaft from thy lyre:
In self-despite the maids of Hellas
Felt thy fraudful fire.
Thee that monster triple-headed,
Couched in darkness, doth revere:
Souls on Stygian billows bedded
Leap thy lyre to hear.

10.

Argus on the hill-side nodded,
Charmed perforce with pleasing sloth
Soon his spirit disembodied
Fluttered, a pale moth,

Fluttered round and round in error
O'er thy lustre softly glassed
In the forest streamlet's mirror,
Then to Hades passed.

11.

Enough! thy beams which long have revelled
On the bosom of the wave
Reach now the ivies wind-dishevelled
Of thy mother's cave.
Under its arch of alabaster
She sits, or leans above the main:
Her happy heart beats fast and faster,
Beats to catch thy strain.

12.

Tempering all things by the suasion
Of gay wiles and flatteries bland,
Wave o'er every heart-sick nation
Wave once more thy wand!
Io Pæan, Io Pæan!
Maia's child, henceforth of all
The stars that gem this blue Ægean
On thee alone I call!

ODE TO THE PLANET VENUS.

O BRIGHTEST of the starry eyes,
Gladness of morn and evening's boast,
That from thy crimson paradise
Leadest the heavenly host!

Tell us what ministers to thee
That dauntless and perpetual glee ;
And seest thou then indeed below
No deeds of Wrong, no shapes of Woe ?

But thou from that celestial station
Glancing at will the wide earth o'er,
With equal gift of contemplation
Measurest the After and Before :—
Were ours a sight as keen and far as thine
Our joy were adamantine and divine.
Not only seest thou 'mid the storms
The ship-boy on some gasping deck,
But her not less whose arms
Flung wide even now in sleep's alarms
Shall yet enwreathe his neck !
Not only 'mid the untended bower
Some maid, in tears her loose hair steeping,
But him who comes, more near each hour,
And comes to stay that weeping !
Not her alone, the late bereaven,
O'er her breathless infant bending,
But wingèd choirs their plumes extending
To waft the innocent to Heaven !
Not only Glory of the Night and Morn,
Radiant with love and edged with luminous scorn,
The Tyrant seest thou, drowning in mad laughter
A nation's groans as with a stormy wind,
But Stygian snakes 'mid royal wreaths entwined,
And the black Vengeance pacing swiftly after !

O Planet blest !
The Lover's lamp, the Wanderer's pledge of rest !
Delight of men, that givest
More beams than thou receivest

From all the bright eyes met
Upon thy coronet!
Lily in Heaven, fresh springing;
White, panting antelope
Climbing the aerial mountain of perpetual Hope!
Sun-smitten, silver Dove,
Seated high up and singing
On Heaven's wide tree fruited with stars above!
O sacred Star,
That, brightening all things, seeing them as they are,
Take thou a free man's vows—
Few gifts do I require:
Shine on thy Poet's straw-roofed house;
His songs, his heart inspire!

TO A GREEK LADY.

1.

Those eyes, dark stars of might and gladness!
Those eyes that breathe soft gloom, as they
Had gathered up the soul of midnight,
And poured it back into the day—
What secret sources feed their lustres?
Their Grecian fountains far away.

2.

I see them lifting up their splendour
While from its lair some Thought upsprings
Or hangs in its aerial lightness
Suspended upon balanced wings:
Once more they flash, as on its object
That Thought in triumph drops and clings.

3.

I see those lips whose every motion
Is music; fragrance every breath:
That cheek which glows like clouds of sunset,
Or gleams as mildly as a wreath
Of crimson fruit in clear streams imaged
Against a dark rich ground beneath!

4.

Those hands in grace a moment folded,
Light hands with fancies light that play,
Lifted as though some lute or viol
Hung viewless in the air, and they
In passing brushed its cords of silver,
Or pointed the sweet sounds their way!

5.

I know not quite if Soul or Spirit
Within thee dwell;—few care to know:—
At least without, and all around thee,
A soul is hovering, swift or slow,
In undulating halo bending
With every movement to and fro!

6.

How fresh must be the airs that fanned thee
A warbler at thy mother's knee!
The wells, thy radiant baths; the ocean;
The infinitely-odoured lea;
The caverned and Eolian forests—
O Isle,[1] how beauteous thou must be!

[1] Corcyra.

7.

That Queen who held in chains the Roman,
  That Queen who spurned th' Augustan chains,
Sailed by it with her golden galleys;
  Nor wholly yet the lustre wanes
That pageant flung beyond the margin,
  And inland far o'er vales and plains.

8.

Greece slumbers yet; but all her glories
  Revive in thee: in thee restored
She walks the world, while round thy footsteps
  The might of all her songs is poured;
And other times, and lands barbaric
  Are taught what ancient Earth adored.

AN AGED GREEK.

I LAUGH whene'er I hear them say
  'At last his hair is white'—
Fools! 'Tis the star of Love all day
  That crowns me with its light!

.

She, she whose evening revelry
  Cheers visibly the skies,
Looks down from heaven and kisses me
  With her far-touching eyes.

My heart, where'er in youth I strayed,
Her silver shafts could thrill:
And now this old, unbending head
She loves and honours still.

With these old locks each breath of air
Is proudly pleased to play:—
Then how, O wanton mockers, dare
Ye tell me I am grey?

THE PANTHEIST.

The Eagle feeds his eyes upon the sun,
And drives the light before him as he plunges
On through the east. The mild, smooth-sailing Dove
Hath snowy wings that waft her o'er the cloud.
The grey Pine tosses in the air, and flings
Music and light from his broad boughs. The Reed
Sighs in the dreary winds: the large sea-flower
Grows in its dark cave like a fair, blind child:
But we know not, and we can never know
Which is the noblest of those visible shapes,
Or which most blest. One all-pervading Spirit
Moves in them all, and is to them as life:—
The Spirit that encircles Space and Time;
That lifts the tides, and downward draws the stars,
That beats within the heart of this green globe;
That holds the universe upon his breast,
And mirrors it upon the mind of man.

THE PLATONIST.

Forget not thy great birth! that heavenly source
From which thy spirit flows, though now in sense
Immersed, and bound upon the rolling Earth.
Weep not, sad Exile, 'mid the winds, because
Thy sides lack wings. The radiance of the Past
Still girds thee, as a glorious sunset heaven
That glows behind the mountains. Would'st thou more?
Beauty is round thee wheresoe'er thou movest:
It sounds in every sound; from cloud and flower
It gleams upon thee. Be what thou hast been!
Draw from the utmost bounds of Life and Love
With one long sigh their powers into thy heart;
And Thought shall flow from thee in arrowy rays
Piercing all space: and Majesty and Joy
Invest thee with such glory as he wears
Who sits in the centre of the spherèd sun!

THE ACADEMIC'S ADDRESS TO TRUTH.

1.

O thou condemned to dwell
Sole in thy sunless well,
Thy faint eyes fixed upon the noontide stars:
O instinct-taught to cower
Within thy watery bower
Scared by the shadow of thy worshippers!

2.

The Muses dance around thee:
With flowers the Gods have crowned thee:
Thy gems make rich the Earth from shore to shore.
But yet no hand divine
Hath ever closed on thine:
And we must pity one whom we adore.

3.

No eye can e'er behold thee;
No arms shall e'er enfold thee:
No kiss shall ever move thy lips apart:
Lone, lovely being, fated,
Beloved, and yet unmated,
To press a cold hand on an unshared heart!

4.

Pure Naiad, far too pure
To brook thy sorrow's cure,
That would'st to any give what none may bear!
Take thou—but grant in turn
One wild-flower by thine urn
Refreshed—this crown that wreathes thy Poet's hair.

AN EPICUREAN'S EPITAPH.

When from my lips the last faint sigh is blown
By Death, dark waver of Lethean plumes,
O! press not then with monumental stone
This forehead smooth nor weigh me down with glooms

From green bowers, grey with dew,
Of Rosemary and Rue.
Choose for my bed some bath of sculptured marble
Wreathed with gay nymphs; and lay me—not alone—
Where sunbeams fall, flowers wave, and light birds warble
To those who loved me murmuring in soft tone,
"Here lies our friend, from pain secure and cold;
And spreads his limbs in peace under the sun-warmed mould!"

WISDOM.

Thou hast no mitre, crown, or sword, or helm;
Temple, high place, or academic grove,
Or garden of delights, or wrangling mart.
An outcast child wert thou, but never nursed
By spotted pard. Thee mighty Nature fed
With hues and shapes of beauty; slanting showers
Perplexed thine infant eyes with their warm drops;
Tall trees thy slumbers charmed, and birds let fall
Sharp shades upon thy lids; but most of all
Serenity came to thee from the stars,
And echoing torrents harmonized thy voice.
Such was thy nurture. Then Experience stern
Added severer lessons. Toils heroic,
Manifold labours, conflict long and strange,
In darkness; Danger, Doubt, Adversity,
Yielded large increase to thy growing thoughts;
These, not the schools; a watchful eye, an ear

Open to that great voice whose clear behests
Stamp upon dutiful hearts, in humble forms,
Those great Ideas man was born to learn—
These, and thine own right hand, taught thee that lore
Terrible to the fools.

O eloquent Greece!
Here didst thou fail. In that great balance weighed
Whose equal scales are Virtue and true Wisdom,
Thou wert found wanting. Therefore all thine Arts
Were but as flowers that crown a victim's brow.

THE ANTIGONE OF SOPHOCLES.

I saw the Poet standing by himself
At old Colonos (now, alas! no more
With dewy laurels fenced, or lit by streams
That gush o'er beds of crocus; lulled no longer
By that dark choir of quick-winged nightingales
That soothed the Eumenides:) he stood in trance,
Resting his forehead 'gainst an olive stem
Round which one arm hung idly—
At last he moved; his head sank slowly back;
On his Olympian brow the invisible air
Rested serene; his eyelids slowly drooped,
Till their dark lashes met with softest touch:
At last a rapture swelled his breast, and rising
Increased upon his face.
As one that inland stands on high-arched downs
Pierced by sea-caves, and wondering hears the sea
Working beneath—half hears it and half feels,

So looked he for a moment; then arose
Bright as a god—around his temples wreathed
A light of sun-fed locks! silent he stood:
It was his hour of immortality!
Even at the moment of that trance he saw
A glorious vision from his own deep spirit
Emerged—a perfect form! o'er earth's dark ball
Hanging he saw it, as the Thunderer sees
That great creative Thought, mankind's one law—
He saw; and cried aloud—Antigone!

THE NIGHTINGALE.

1.

Tired with my long day's travel
At night I laid my head
Upon the grass and gravel
Of old Cephysus' bed.
Yet Sleep her steps susurrent
Bent towards me but to fly,
Scared back o'er that slow current
By a Nightingale hard by.

2.

'Alas, thou little mourner!
Remit that song of woe;
Sad Philomela's scorner
Was slain long years ago:
'Tis now a time-worn fable:
One half was never true;
Then why for ever babble
Of woes ne'er felt by you?'

3.

The little bird persisted:
Like hers my grief was vain:
As oft as e'er she listed
She poured the same sad strain.
Though none might share her weeping,
Though none was nigh to praise,
All night she ceased not, steeping
In melody the sprays.

ZOE, AN ATHENIAN CHILD.

1.

Blue eyes, but of so dark a blue
That sadder souls than mine
Find nought but night beneath their dew,
Such locks as Proserpine
Around her shadowy forehead wears,
Made smoother by Elysian airs,
And lips whose song spontaneous swells
Like airs from Ocean's moonlit shells—
These, lovely child! are thine;
And that forlorn yet radiant grace
That best becomes thy name and race!

2.

A forehead orbed into the light;
Pure temples marbled round

By feathery veins that streak the white,
More white thus dimly wound,
And taper fingers, hands self-folded,
Like shapes of alabaster moulded,
And cheek whose blushes are as those
Aurora cools on Pindan snows
Ere night is yet discrowned—
Not brighter, clad in Fancy's hues,
Or seen in dream—an Infant Muse!

3.

O fetch her from yon Naxian glade
One chaplet of the Bacchic vine
Or glimmering ivy-wreath yet sprayed
With dews that taste like wine!
She loves to pace the wild sea shore—
O drop her wandering fingers o'er
The bosom of some chorded shell:
Her touch will make it speak as well
As infant Hermes made
That tortoise, in its own despite
Thenceforth in Heaven a shape star-bright!

I.

THE TOMB OF AGAMEMNON.—1.

Two peaks I saw: one eminent in light;
The other shrouded by the shadow thrown
From his great brother's bosom on his own:
They stood, as Life to Death or Day to Night
Opposed. Descending from their common height
The mountain rivulet clasped with gentle moan
A funeral vault in vernal bravery dight—
Through the dim arch a low faint breeze was blown:
Not fainter through his murderer's hair unshaken
Breathed once the sleeping King! Sad odours blended
With that faint breeze: poppies on high suspended
Their dark lamps fed as with Elysian oil:
While bees low murmured, like the whispering coil
Round the sick bed of one men fear to waken!

II.

THE TOMB OF AGAMEMNON.—2.

'Ah, fair Briseis! that long, backward gaze
On thy Love thrown so silently, was vain:
Ah, sad Cassandra! little didst thou gain,
Spelling the terror of the future days:
Foresight is woe foretasted: Sight betrays:
That which we touch is ours: and to retain
That little (so man's life Disaster sways)
Were hard as water in the palm to strain.
The Fates do mock us.'—

King of Men! thine ear
From Troy's death-cry stern wisdom gathered hath:
Look up! a Form bends dreadful o'er thy bath!
An axe she bears, and death is in her eyes.
The Fates demand thee! they whom the Gods fear—
Thee the great Gods give up—*their* Sacrifice!

III.

A STATUE OF JUNO.

THAT breadth and amplitude of brow uncrowned;
Those awful lids, lifted, nor e'er to close:
Those orbs that on their own calm gaze repose;
Those lips sedate though wreathed with smiles around:
That grand expanse of breast, wherein, enthroned,
Majesty dwells, and peaceful pleasure grows
And spreads, unheaving its Olympian snows
Against that marble zone, their sacred bound;
These, and the tall spear like a sceptre grasped,
Making a firm foot firmer: and the mien
Divine, and sphere in one large hand enclasped,
Fitly announce and without words rehearse
The Matron Ruler of the World, the Queen
Of Gods, and Mistress of the Universe!

IV.

THE THEATRE AT ARGOS.

THIS rock-hewn theatre, yon stage-like plain,
Are not unpeopled: onward in my trance
From those blue mountains to the glimmering main
A mightier theatre, bright hosts advance;
The old Homeric hosts, with spear and lance:
The brother monarchs lead the glorious train
Car-borne—a herald leans on either rein:
Clear rings the trump: bright crests in myriads dance.
O'er Juno's Argolis the Sun is set:
Her car is here; her tempest-footed steeds:
Still on that poppied stone her victim bleeds:
Shoreward her Argive ranks are rushing yet;
Down the grey sands the last black ship has grated—
And now, woe, woe to Troy—her fall is fated!

V.

THE TOMB OF THEMISTOCLES AT THE PIRÆUS.

THE Sun is slowly sinking—it is set—
Yet still yon mountain range of Megara
(Like one that on his palate strives to stay
A taste forgone) retains, purpureal yet,
The sweet remembrance: crimsoned, the waves fret
Against those far-famed Walls that gird the bay,
Marmoreal record of a mightier day
When, pushed above that rocky parapet
In one elliptic wave of blood-stained brine,
This gulf, beneath the unwonted weight accurst
Of Persia's myriad ships, bounded and burst,
And, sinking, left more high its sanguine line
Than yonder margin where the Athenian's grave
Still in its secret joy engulfs the applauding wave!

VI.

SOPHOCLES.

ALONE I wandered through a city lone,
(The tomb august, and monumental state
Of Empire passed away and desolate)
To where, 'mid crumbling frieze, and columns prone,
Down a great Temple-court the shades were thrown
Of seven majestic Statues calm as Fate:
The mouldering altar, like a snowy zone
They girt: I midmost in that circle sate.
One was a King; and regal though uncrowned,
Low-bent he stood, standing as if he slept,
With blinded eyes, and chains his feet around:
Another was a royal Maid, who kept
Her eyes upon an urn funereal pressed
By bo'n her marble hands deep deep into her breast.

VII.

ÆSCHYLUS.

A SEA-CLIFF carved into a bas-relief!
Dark thoughts and sad, conceived by brooding Nature;
Brought forth in storm:—dread shapes of Titan stature,
Emblems of Fate, and Change, Revenge, and Grief,
And Death, and Life:—a caverned Hieroglyph
Confronting still with thunder-blasted frieze
All stress of years, and winds, and wasting seas:—
The stranger nears it in his fragile skiff
And hides his eyes. Few, few shall pass, great Bard,
Thy dim sea-portals! Entering, fewer yet
Shall pierce thy mystic meanings, deep and hard:
But these shall owe to thee an endless debt:
The Eleusinian caverns they shall tread
That wind beneath man's heart; and wisdom learn with dread.

VIII.

THE SUN GOD.

I SAW the Master of the Sun. He stood
High in his luminous car, himself more bright;
An Archer of immeasurable might:
On his left shoulder hung his quivered load;
Spurned by his Steeds the eastern mountain glowed;
Forward his eager eye, and brow of light
He bent; and, while both hands that arch embowed,
Shaft after shaft pursued the flying Night.
No wings profaned that godlike form: around
His neck high held an ever-moving crowd
Of locks hung glistening: while such perfect sound
Fell from his bowstring, that th' ethereal dome
Thrilled as a dewdrop; and each passing cloud
Expanded, whitening like the ocean foam.

IX.

URANIA.

Urania! Voice of Heaven, sidereal Muse!—
Lo, through the dark vault issuing from afar,
She comes, reclining on a lucid star:
Her dark eyes, trembling through celestial dews,
The glory of high thoughts far off diffuse:
While the bright surges of her refluent hair
Stream back, upraised upon sustaining air
Which lifts that scarf deep-dyed in midnight hues
To a wide arch above her hung like heaven.
I closed my eyes. Athwart me, like a blast,
Music as though of jubilant gods was driven.
Once more I gazed. That form divine had passed
Earth's dark confine. The ocean's utmost rim
Burned yet a moment: then the world grew dim.

X.

THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS.—1.

All ye who seek the famed Acropolis,
First bathe in old Ilyssus, Muse-loved stream,
Whilst yet it laughs in Citherea's beam,
Lifting its cheek to catch her fugitive kiss:
There drown all thoughts save thoughts of mirth and bliss!
Fanciful sighs for rites of old supreme—
Now past—blow from you like an idle dream:
That which yon Summit ever was it is.
Entwine your heads with myrtle: with light heart
(A joyful band and deeming joy a duty)
Ascend that fairest hill which Earth sustains.
A giant Altar vowed to sovran Art
It stands; its sacred Offerings sun-clad Fanes,
To Beauty raised—owning no God but Beauty!

XI.

THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS.—2.

Pallas Athena! deep of soul and wise!
Mighty in thought and act; severe of breast;
To this high fane, thine ancient region's crest,
Descend, and roll once more thine azure eyes
O'er th' Olive land, remembering well those ties
Which lured thee hither from the World's wide quest,
And reared thy seat of venerable rest
Under the equal arch of those broad skies!
Leave it not ever—round thee stand the mountains;
Bright as thy shield when it becomes thy mirror,
For victory arming, gleams yon purple Sea:
Nor silent yet the old poetic fountains—
Make thou thy Sons, redeemed from ancient Error
And recent bonds, more vile—strong, pure, and free!

XII.

THE PRISON OF SOCRATES.

(A CAVE OPPOSITE TO THE ACROPOLIS.)

Pious the memory, or, if fabulous,
The Mythos reverent which such spot assigned
Prison of him the wisest of his kind,
Self-dedicated to the grave: for thus,
By setting suns touched with light dolorous
Thy countenance, Pallas, as the day declined
Was turned, dread image of a sorrowing mind,
On him—as Fancy turns it now on us.
But Wisdom's self in all its might and glory
On him for ever without shadow shone,
In Life as Death. No need of song or story—
Authentic or imagined needeth none!
Truth bent from Heaven, and fixed on him for aye
That gaze whose light is everlasting Day.

XIII.

WRITTEN WHILE SAILING ON THE GULF OF LEPANTO.

All around they lie, deep breath to breath replying,
Those outworn seamen in their well-earned sleep:
From the blue concave to the dim blue deep
No sound beside. Fluttering all night, or sighing,
Since morn the breeze delicious hath been dying,
And now is dead. On yonder snowy steep
The majesty of Day diffused is lying;
While Evening's Powers in silence seaward creep
From glens that violet-shade the lilac vest
Of Delphi's hills. Ye mariners, sleep well!
Run slowly, golden sands, and noiselessly!
There stands the great Corinthian citadel:
Parnassus there: Rest, wearied pinnace, rest!
Sleep, sacred air! sleep on, marmoreal sea!

XIV.

THE SETTING OF THE MOON NEAR CORINTH.

From that dejected brow in silence beaming
A light it seems too feeble to retain,
A sad, calm, tearful light through vapours gleaming,
Slowly thou sinkest on the Ægean main;
To me an image, in thy placid seeming
Of some fair mourner who will not complain;
Of one whose cheek is pale, whose eyes are streaming,
Whose sighs are heaved unheard,—not heaved in vain.
And yet what power is thine? as thou dost sink,
Down sliding slow along that azure hollow,
The great collected Deep thy course doth follow,
Amorous the last of those faint smiles to drink;
And all his lifted fleets in thee obey
The symbol of an unpresuming sway!

XV.

CONSTANTINOPLE.

Is this the sovereign seat of Constantine?
Is that indeed Sophia's far-famed Dome,
Where first the Faith was led in triumph home
Like some high bride, with banner and bright sign,
And melody and flowers? Round yonder shrine
The sons, the rivals, yea the lords of Rome,
Bowed they in reverence, awed by truths divine
Breathed through the golden lips of Chrysostom?
But where that conquering Cross, which, high in heaven,
That Dome of old surmounted? Angels sweeping
The aërial coasts hang now no more suspended—
With the wild sea-dirge their chaunts are no more blended—
Onward they speed, onward by anguish driven;
And the winds waft alone their heavenly weeping.

XVI.

ISLAM.

That Asian ardour, deep, and wide, and still,
Which once, like Heaven o'er glowing sands, did brood
Over this People's heart, stubborn and rude,
Hath left them. Did it yet their pulses fill,
They had not lost that fateful might of Will
Which from Imaus on to Atlas hewed
A way before them—in its terrible mood
'Making ridiculous' the boasted skill
Of Western Art alike and Arms. Of old
This People's spirit was an arch of fire,

Like a 'clear heat at harvest.' Now remains
Nought but the hoary herb and branded plains,
Which beasts shall trample, issuing in their ire
Forth from the depth of their morasses cold!

EUROPA.

1.

When from his white chest first he pushed the shining deep that stayed him,
Fair-tressed Europa thought the Bull too gentle to upbraid him;
Her laughing face thrown back to those who spread their hands to chide him,
She sang—'We all his trappings wrought; yet I alone dared ride him!'

2.

But when her father's towers went down beneath successive surges,
And the sweet clamour of her mates grew hoarse amid sea dirges,
The simple child her dark eye raised and awe-struck hand to Heaven,
And prayed of all the Gods (but most of Jove) to be forgiven!

3.

Her small foot first the billow brushed—at last her knee it bedded:
Warm felt the waves as lovers' sighs, long-parted or late-wedded:

But she her dark eye dim with tears kept fixed, and
strove to smother
That cry—'My father and my mates! help Cadmus,
help, my brother!'

4.

Behind, the Sea-gods linked their pomp, showing to
Jove devotion,
And smiles went o'er the purple breadth of loud
resounding ocean:
O'erawed though knowing not the God, she strove
that cry to smother—
'Alas! my father and my mates! help, Cadmus,
help, my brother!'

5.

Hard by old Triton cheered with song the deep sea
wildernesses;
Far off the Nymphs in myriads rose and mixed their
whispering tresses;
But Asia's lonely daughter still looked up and strove
to smother
That cry—'My father and my mates! help, Cadmus,
help, my brother!'

6.

A Pirate's bark to Chios steered:—that pomp they
marked with terror,
And spectres of forgotten sins rose dark o'er
memory's mirror;
Their eyes the sailors hid, the Priest made haste a
kid to slaughter,
And, red as Jove's imperial heart, its life-blood
tinged the water.

7.

Men say that Venus winked on high, a deeper nectar quaffing—
That Phœbus, westward driving, sang, prophetic sang though laughing;
'Fair maid! more numerous than the tears adown that pale face flowing
One day shall gleam the crowns of Kings to thee their sceptres owing!'

8.

Weep, weep no more! yon Cretan shore at last o'er ocean peereth,
And every little Love that round, by thee unmarked, careereth
In triumph swooping snaps his bow, and claps his hands loud singing,
'Our precious spoils receive, O Isle, like Delos upward springing!'

STANZAS.

1.

All things wax old. What voice shall chase that gloom
Which hangs o'er Adam's tomb?
Over the patriarchal palm and tent
The ocean's vault is bent:
Past is the Persian chivalry; and past
Old Egypt's lore at last:

Where Priam reigned of old, where Homer sang,
  Barbaric javelins clang:
Along the wealthy Carthaginian shores
  Again the lion roars;
And Rome at last her ancient foe deplores.

2.

Dead is our Arthur; dead the Cid of Spain:
  Alfred and Charlemagne.
Where now are Europe's wise and holy kings
  'With whom old story rings'?
Where now the mitred martyrs of the Faith,
  Martyrs in life and death?
Meek sages, courteous lovers, bards devout,
  Scorning the world's vain shout?
Where now that early Church whose antheme l rites
  Made Earth like Heaven—her nights
Glorious and blest as day with votive lights?

3.

Lay down, vain-glorious King, for shame lay down
  Thy sceptre, globe, and crown!
Draw near, my dark-eyed Delphic boy; fill up
  With Naxian wine my cup.
Young Spring hath dropped the rosebud from her
    breast—
  Summer her sun-clad crest
And Autumn's gorgeous fruits, in vain increased,
  But spread her funeral feast.
Dark Winter, mailed with ice, and stern and hoar,
  I praise much more—
To him this last libation I will pour.

GREEK IDYLS.

I.—GLAUCÈ.

I LOVE you, pretty maid, for you are young :
I love you, pretty maid, for you are fair :
I love you, pretty maid, for you love me.

They tell me that, a babe, smiling you gazed
Upon the stars, with open, asking eyes,
And tremulous lips apart. Erelong, self-taught,
You found for every star and every flower
Legends and names and fables sweet and new.

Oh that when far away I still might see thee !
How oft, when wearied with the din of life
On thee mine eyes would rest, thy Grecian heavens
Brightening that orbèd brow !—
Hesper should shine upon thee, lamp of Love,
Beneath whose radiance thou wert born. O Hesper !
Thee will I love and reverence evermore !

Bind up that shining hair into a knot
And let me see that polished neck of thine
Uprising from the bed snow-soft, snow-white
In which it rests so gracefully ! What God
Hath drawn upon thy forehead's ivory plane
Those two clear streaks of sweet and glistening black
Lifted in earnest mirth or lovely awe ?
Open those Pleiad eyes, liquid and tender,
And let me lose myself among their depths !
Caress me with thine infant hands, and tell me
Old tales divine that love makes ever new
Of Gods and men entoiled in flowery nets,
Of heroes sighing all their youth away,
And Troy, death-sentenced by those Argive eyes.

Come forth, dear maid, the day is calm and cool.
And bright though sunless. Like a long green scarf,
The tall Pines crowning yon grey promontory
In distant ether hang, and cut the sea.
But lovers better love the dell, for there
Each is the other's world. How indolently
The tops of those pale poplars bend and sway
Over the violet-braided river-brim!
Whence comes their motion, for no wind is heard,
And the long grasses move not, nor the reeds?
Here we will sit, and watch the rushes lying
Like locks, along the leaden-coloured stream
Far off—and thou, O child, shalt talk to me
Of Naiads and their loves. A blissful life
They lead who live beneath the flowing waters:
They cherish calm, and think the sea-weeds fair:
They love each other's beauty; love to stand
Among the lilies, holding back their tresses
And listening, with their gentle cheek reclined
Upon the flood, to some far melody
Of Pan or shepherd piping in lone woods
Until the unconscious tears run down their face.
Mild are their loves, nor burdensome their thoughts—
And would that such a life were mine and thine!

GREEK IDYLS.

2.—IONÈ.

Ionè, fifteen years have o'er you passed,
And, taking nothing from you in their flight,
Have given you much. You look like one for whom

The day has morning only, time but Spring.
Your eyes are large and calm, your lips serene,
As if no Winter with your dreams commingled,
You that dream always, or that never dream!

Dear maid, you should have been a shepherdess—
But no: ill-tended then your flocks had strayed!
Young fawns you should have led; such fawns as once
The quivered Queen had spared to startle! Then
Within your hand a willow wand, your brow
Wreathed with red roses dabbled in warm rains,
How sweetly, with half-serious countenance,
Through the green alleys had you ta'en your way!
And they, your spotted train, how happily
Would they have gambolled by you—happiest she
The milk-white creature in the silver chain!

Ionè, lay the tapestry down: come forth:
No golden ringlet shall you add this morn
To bright Apollo: and poor Daphne there!
Without her verdant branches she must rest
Another day—a cruel tale, sweet girl!

You will not! Then farewell our loves for ever!
We are too far unlike; not Cyclops more
Unlike that Galatea whom he wooed.
I love the loud-resounding sea divine;
I love the wintry sunset, and the stress
Inexorable of wide-wasting storms;
I love the waste of foam-washed promontories;
The singing of the topmost mountain pines
In safety heard far down; the ringing sleet,
Thunder, and all portentous change that makes
The mind of mortals like to suns eclipsed

Waning in icy terrors. These to you
Are nothing. On the ivied banks you lie
In deep green valleys grey with noontide dew;
There bathe your feet in bubbling springs, your hands
Playing with the moist pansies near your face.

These bowers are musical with nightingales
Morning and noon and night. Among these rocks
A lovely life is that you lead; but I
Will make it lovelier with some pretty gift
If you are constant to me! Constant never
Was Nymph or Nereid:—like the waves they change—
O Nymph, so change not thou! A boat I'll make
Scooped from a pine: yourself shall learn to row it;
Swifter than winds or sounds can fleet; or else
Your scarf shall be the sail, and you shall glide,
While the stars drop their light upon the bay,
On like a bird between the double heaven!
Are these but trivial joys? Ah me! fresh leaves
Gladden the forests; but no second life
Invests our branches—feathers new make bright
The birds; but when our affluent locks desert us,
No Spring restores them. Dried-up streams once more
The laughing Nymphs replenish; but man's life,
By fate drawn down and smothered in the sands,
Never looks up. Alas! my sweet Ionè,
Alcæus also loved; but in his arms
Finds rest no more the song-full Lesbian maid,
Her breast all shaken by the storm of song,
Or thrills of song unborn!
The indignant hand attesting Gods and men
Achilles lifts no more: to dust is turned
His harp that glittered through the wild sea spray,

Though the black wave falls yet on Ilion's shore.
All things must die—the Songs themselves, except
The devout hymn of grateful love; or hers,
The wild swan's, chaunting her death melody.

GREEK IDYLS.

3.—LYCIUS.

LYCIUS! the female race is all the same!
All variable, as the Poets tell us;
Mad though caprice—half way 'twixt men and children!

Acasta, mildest late of all our maids,
Colder and calmer than a sacred well,
Is now more changed than Spring has changed these woods;
Hers is the fault, not mine. Yourself shall judge.

From Epidaurus, where for three long days
With Nicias I had stayed, honouring the God,
If strength might thus mine aged Sire renerve,
Last evening we returned. The way was dull
And vexed with mountains: tired ere long was I
From warding off the oleander boughs
Which, as my comrade o'er the stream's dry bed
Pushed on, closed backward on my mule and me.
The flies maintained a melody unblest;
While Nicias, of his wreath Nemean proud,
Sang of the Satyrs and the Nymphs all day
Like one by Esculapius fever-smitten.
Arrived at eve, we bathed; and drank, and ate

Of figs and olives till our souls exulted:
Lastly we slept like Gods. While morning shone,
So filled was I with weariness and sleep
That as a log till noon I lay, then rose,
And in the bath-room sat. While there I languished
Reading that old, divine and holy tale
Of sad Ismenè and Antigonè,
Two warm soft hands around me sudden flung
Closed both my eyes; and a clear, shrill, sweet laughter
Told me that she it was, Acasta's self,
That brake upon my dreams. 'What would you, child?'
'Child, child!' Acasta cried, 'I am no child—
You do me wrong in calling me a child!
Come with me to the willowy river's brim:
There read, if you must read.'
Her eyes not less
Than hands uplifted me, and forth we strayed.
O'er all the Argolic plain Apollo's shafts
So fiercely fell, methought the least had slain
A second Python. From that theatre
Hewn in the rock the Argive tumult rolled:
Before the fane of Juno seven vast oxen
Lowed loud, denouncing Heaven ere yet they fell:
While from the hill-girt meadows rose a scent
So rich, the salt sea odours vainly strove
To pierce those fumes it curled about my brain,
And sting the nimbler spirits. Nodding I watched
The pale herbs from the parched bank that trailed
Bathing delighted in voluptuous cold,
And scarcely swayed by that slow winding stream:
I heard a sigh—I asked not whence it came.
At last a breeze went by, to glossy waves

Rippling the steely flood: I noted then
The reflex of the poplar stem thereon
Curled into spiral wreaths, and toward me darting
Like a long, shining water-snake: I laughed
To see its restlessness. Acasta cried,
'Read—if you will not speak—or look at me!'
Unconsciously I glanced upon the page,
Bent o'er it, and began to chaunt that song,
'Favoured by Love are they that love not deeply,'
When, leaping from my side, she snatched the book,
Into the river dashed it, bounded by,
And, no word spoken, left me there alone.

Lycius! I see you smile; but know you not
Nothing is trifling which the Muse records,
And lovers love to muse on? Let the Gods
Act as to them seems fitting. Hermes loved—
Phœbus loved also—but the hearts of Gods
Are everlasting like the suns and stars,
Their loves as transient as the clouds. For me
A peaceful life is all I seek, and far
Removed from cares and all the female kind!

LINES WRITTEN UNDER DELPHI.

I.

My goal is reached—homeward henceforth my way.
I have beheld Earth's glories. Had the eyes
Of those I love reposed on them with mine,
No future wish to roam beyond the range
Of one green pasture circling one clear lake

Itself by one soft woodland girt around,
Could touch this heart. My pilgrimage is made.

II.

I have seen Delphi: I no more shall see it:
I go contented, having seen it once;
Yet here awhile remain, prisoner well-pleased
Of reboant winds. Within this mountain cove
Their sound alone finds entrance. Lightly the waves,
Rolled from the outer to the inner bay,
Dance in blue silver o'er the silver sands;
While, like a chain-bound antelope by some child
Mocked oft with tempting hand and fruit upheld,
Our quick caique vaults up among the reeds,
The ripples that plunge past it upward sending
O'er the grey margin matted with sea-pink
Ripplings of light. The moon is veiled; a mile
Below the mountain's eastern range it hangs;
Yon gleam is but its reflex, from white clouds
Scattered along Parnassian peaks of snow.

III.

I see but waves and snows. Memory alone
Fruition hath of what this morn was mine:
O'er many a beauteous scene at once she broods,
And feeds on joys without confusion blent
Like mingling sounds or odours. Now she rests
On that serene expanse, the confluence
Of three long vales, in sweetness upward heaved,
Ample and rich as Juno's breast what time
The Thunderer's breath in sleep moves over it:
Bathes in those runnels now, that raced in light
This morn as at some festival of streams,

Through arbutus and ilex, wafting each
Upon its glassy track a several breeze,
Each with its tale of joy or playful sadness.
Fair nymphs, by great Apollo's fall untouched!
Sing, sing, for ever! When did golden Phœbus
Look sad one moment for a fair nymph's fall?

IV.

A still, black glen—below, a stream-like copse
Of hoary olives; rocks like walls beside,
Never by Centaur trod, though these fresh gales
Give man the Centaur's strength. Again I mount,
From cliff to cliff, from height to height ascend;
Glitters Castalia's Fount; I see, I touch it!
That Rift once more I reach, the Oracular seat,
Whose arching rocks half meet in air suspense;—
'Twixt them is one blue streak of heaven; hard by
Dim Temples hollowed in the stone, for rites
Mysterious shaped, or mansions of the dead:
Released, I turn, and see, far, far below,
A vale so rich in floral garniture,
And perfume from the orange and the sea,
So girt with white peaks flashing from sky chasms,
So lighted with the vast blue dome of Heaven,
So lulled with music from the winds and waves,
The guest of Phœbus claps his hand and shouts,
'There is but one such spot; from Heaven Apollo
Beheld;—and chose it for his earthly shrine!'

V.

Phœbus Apollo! loftiest shape of all
That glorified the range of Grecian song,
By Poet hymned or Shepherd when the rocks

Confessed the first bright impress of thy feet;
By many an old man praised when Thracian blasts
Sang loud, and pine-wood stores began to fail;
Served by the sick man searching hill and plain
For herb assuasive; courted by sad maids
On whose pure lips thy fancied kiss descended
Softly as vernal beam on primrose cold:
By Fortune's troubled favourites ofttime sued
For dubious answer, then when Fate malign,
Ascending o'er the horizon of high Hopes,
Her long fell glance had cast on them—Apollo.
Who, what wert thou? Let those that read thy tale
In clouded chambers of the North, reply,
'An empty dream!'—bid them fling far the scroll,
The dusty parchment cast aside for ever,
Or scan with light from thy Parnassian skies!
For Commentator's lamp give them thine orb
Flaming on high, transfixing cloud and wave
Or noon-tide laurel—(as the Zephyr strikes it
Daphnè once more shrinks trembling from thy beams)—
Were these but fancies? O'er the world they reared
The only empire verily universal
Founded by man—for Fancy heralds Thought;
Thought Act; and nations Are as they Believe.
Strong were such fancies; strong not less than fair!
The plant spontaneous of Society
In Greece, by them with stellar power was dewed.
And, nursed by their far influence, grew and flowered:
A state of order and fair fellowship,
Man with man walking, not in barbarous sort
His own prey finding, each, and his own God;
A state of freedom, not by outward force

Compressed, or ice-like knit by negatives ;
A frank communion of deep thoughts with glad,
Light cares with grave ; a changeful melody
Varying each moment, yet in soul the same ;
A temple raised for beauty and defence ;
An armed dance held for a festival ;
A balanced scheme that gave each power a limit,
Each toil a crown, and every art her Muse !
Oh frank and graceful life of Grecian years !
Whence came thy model ? From the Grecian heaven
The loves and wars of Gods, their works and ways,
Their several spheres distinct yet interwreathed,
By Greece were copied on a lesser stage.
Our thoughts soar high to light our paths on earth :
Terrestrial circles from celestial take
Their impress in man's science : Stars unreached
Our course o'er ocean guide : Orphean sounds
The walls of cities raised :—thus mythic bards
For all the legislators legislated !

VI.

Yet these were idols : such as worshipped these
Were worshippers of idols. Holy and True !
How many are there not idolaters ?
Traditions, Systems, Passion, Interest, Power—
Are these not idols ? Ay, of idols worst !
Not that men worship these ; but that before them
Down-bent, the faculty that worship pays
Shrivels and dies. Man's spirit alone adores,
And can adore but Spirit. What is not God,
Howe'er our fears may crouch, or habit grovel,
Or sensuous fancy dote, we worship not :
Unless God looks on man, he cannot pray ;

Such is Idolatry's masked Atheism!
—Yes, these were idols, for man made them such!
By a corrupt heart all things are corrupted,
God's works alike or products of the mind.
The Soul, insurgent 'gainst its Maker, lacks
The strength its vassal powers to rule. The Will
To blind Caprice grows subject: Reason, torn
From Faith, becomes the Understanding's slave;
And Passion's self in Appetite is lost.
Then Idols dominate—Despots by Self-Will
Set up, where Law and Faith alike are dead,
To awe the anarchy of godless souls.
Nought but a Worship, spiritual and pure,
Profound, habitual, strong through loving awe,
A true heart's tribute to the God of Truth,
From selfishness redeemed, and so from sense
Secured, though conversant with shapes of sense.
Nought but such Worship, with spontaneous force
From our whole Being equably ascending
As odour from a flower or fount's clear breath,
Redeems us from Idolatry. In vain
Are proudly wise appeals that deprecate
Rites superstitious; vain are words though shrill
With scorn—stark, pointed finger—forehead ridged
With blear-eyed Scepticism's myriad wrinkles:
Saintly we must be, or Idolatrous.
After his image Man creates him Gods,
Kneading the symbol (as a symbol, pure
And salutary) to a form compact
With servile soul and mean mechanic hand:
Thus to their native dust his Thoughts return,
Abashed, and of mortality convinced.

VII.

At Salem was the Law. The Holy Land
Its orient terrace by the ocean reared,
And thereon walked the Holy One, at cool
Of the world's morn : there visible state He kept.
At Salem was the Law on stone inscribed ;
But over all the world, within man's heart
The unwritten Law abode, from earliest time
Upon our nature stampt, nor wholly lost.
Men saw it, loved it, praised—and disobeyed.
Therefore the Conscience, whose applausive voice
Their march triumphant should have led with joy
To all perfection, from a desert pealed
The Baptist's note alone ; 'Repent, repent ;'
And men with song more flattering filled their ears.
Yet still the undersong was holy ! long
(Though cast on days unblest, though sin-defiled)
The mind accepted, yea, the heart revered,
That which the Will lacked strength to follow.
Conscience,
Her crown monarchal first, her fillet next
Snatched from her sacred brows, a minstrel's wreath
Assumed, and breathed in song her soul abroad :
On outcast Duty's grave she, with her tears,
Dropt flowers funereal of surpassing beauty ;
With Reason walked ; the right path indicated,
Though her imperative voice was heard no more.
Nor spake in vain. Man, fallen man, was great,
Remembering ancient greatness : Hymn and tale
Held, each, some portion of dismembered Truth,
Severely sung by Poets wise and brave.
They sang of Justice, God's great Attribute,
With tragic buskin, and a larger stride

Following the fated victim step by step:
They sang of Love crowning the toils of life:
Of Joy they sang; for Joy, that gift divine,
Primal and wingèd creature, with full breath
Through all the elastic limbs of Grecian fable
Poured her redundant life, the noble tongue
Strong as the brazen clang of ringing arms,
With resonance of liquid sounds enriching
Sweet as the music-laughter of the Gods:
Of heavenly Pity, Prophet-like they sang;
And, feeling after good though finding not,
Of Him, that Good not yet in Flesh revealed,
By ceaseless vigils, tears, and lifted palms,
And yearnings infinite and unrepressed,
A separate and authentic witness bore.
Thus was the end foreshown. Thus Error's cloud
Turned forth its silver lining on the night.'
Thus too—for us at least a precious gift,
Dear for the lore it grasped, by all it lacked
Sternly made bold vain-glorious thoughts to chide,
Wisdom shone forth—but not for men unwise:
Her beams but taint the dead. Man's Guilt and Woe
She proved; and her own Helplessness confessed.
Such were her two great functions. Woe to those
Who live with Art for Faith, and Bards for Priests!
These are supplanted: Sense their loftiest hopes
Will sap; and Fiends usurp their oracles!

VIII.

Olympian dreams, farewell! your spell is past:
I turn from you away! From Eros' self,
From heavenly Beauty on thy crystal brow
Uranian Venus, starred in gentlest light,

From thee, Prometheus, chained on Caucasus,
Io, from thee, sad wanderer o'er the earth,
From thee, great Hercules, the son of Heaven
And of Humanity held long in pain;
Heroic among men; by labours tried;
Descending to the Shades, and leading thence
The Lost; while infant still, a Serpent-slayer;
In death a dread and mystic Sacrifice:
From thee, more high than all, from thee, Apollo!
Light of the world whose sacred beam, like words,
Illustrated the forehead of the earth;
Supreme of Harmonists, whose song flowed forth
Pure from that light; great slayer of the Serpent
That mocked thy Mother; master of that art
Helpful to anguished flesh; Oracular:
Secretly speaking wisdom to the just;
Openly to the lost from lips despised
Like thy Cassandra's flinging it to waste;
Phœbus Apollo! here at thy chief shrine
From thee I turn, and stern confession make
That not the vilest weed yon ripple casts
Here at my feet, but holds a loftier gift
Than all the Grecian Legends! Let them go—
Because the mind of man they lifted up.
But corruptible instincts grovelling left
On Nature's common plane—yea, and below it;
Because they slightly healed the People's wound,
And sought in genial fancy, finite hopes,
Proportioned life, and dialectic Art,
A substitute for Virtue; and because
They gave for nothing that which Faith should earn
Casting the pearls of Truth 'neath bestial feet:
Because they washed the outside of the cup,
And dropped a thin veil o'er the face of Death;

Because they neither brought man to his God,
Nor let him feel his weakness—let them go!
Wisdom that raises not her sons is Folly:
Truth in its unity alone is Truth.

IX.

What now is Delphi? Where that temple now
Dreadful to kings; with votive offerings stored,
Tripod, or golden throne from furthest lands,
Or ingot huge? Where now that tremulous stone,
Centre of all things deemed—Earth's beating heart?
What now is Delphi? yea, or Hellas' self,
With all her various States; epitome
Of Nations; stage whereon in little space
Forecasting Time rehearsed his thousand parts?
Sparta's one camp; the sacred plain of Thebes;
That plain, pious as rich, whence grateful Ceres
The band that blesses Earth upraised to Heaven;
The unboastful freedom of Arcadian vales;
Athens with Academic Arts, and ships
Far-seen from pillared headlands? Where, O where
Olympia's chariot-course that bent the eyes
Of Greece on one small ring shining like fire;
Or they, that sacred Council, at whose nod
King and Republic trembled? Gone for ever!
Vine on the wave diffused, budding with Isles;
Bower of young Earth, wherein the East and West,
Wedded, their beauteous progeny upreared;
Hellas, by Nature blest, by Freedom nursed,
By Providence led on through discipline
Of change, till that Philosophy was formed
Which made one City man's perpetual Teacher—
Hellas is past! A lamentable voice

Forth from the caverns of Antiquity
Issuing in mystery, answers, Where is Egypt?
Egypt of magic craft and starry lore,
Eternal brooder on the unknown Past
Through the long vista of her Kings and Priests
Descried, as setting Moon beyond the length
Of forest aisle, or desert colonnade;
Eldest of nations, and apart, like Night
Dark-veiled amid the synod of the Gods?
The sun and stars, above her circling, stare
At pyramids sand-drowned and long processions
Now petrified to lines of marble shapes
That lead to Sphinx-girt Cities of the Dead.
Where now is Babylon, mighty by peace
And gold, and men countless as forest leaves?
Persia, the Macedonian, Carthage, Tyre?
All gone—restored to earth! Great Rome herself,
Haughty with arcs of triumph, theatres
Sphered to embrace all Nations and their Gods;
Roads from one centre piercing lands remote;
Bridges, fit type of conquest's giant stride;
Great Rome herself, empire of War and Law,
Yoking far regions, harrowing those fields
Reserved for Christian seed—Great Rome herself
Was, and is not! The eternal edict stands:
The power from God which comes not, drops and dies.

X.

Hark, to that sound! yon ocean Eagle drives
The mist of morn before her, seaward launched
From her loved nest on Delphi. She though stern,
Can love—a divine instinct, that outlasts

Phœbus, thy fabulous honours! Far away
The storms are dying, and the night-bird pours,
Encouraged thus, her swift and rapturous song.
Ah! when that song is over, I depart!
Return, my wandering thoughts! the ascending Moon
Smiles on her Brother's peaks, and many a ridge
Her glance solicits; many a stirring wood
Exults in her strong radiance as she glides
On from the pine gulf to the gulf of clouds.
Return, my thoughts! the innumerous cedar cones
Of Lebanon must lull you now no more,
Nor fall of Empires with as soft a sound.
O'er famed Colonos stoop no more in trance,
Eyeing the city towers. No longer muse,
With mind divided, though a single heart,
On legend—true or erring! Earth can yield
No scene more fair than this—and Nature's beauty
Is ever irreproachable. Return!
A long breath take of this ambrosial clime
Ere lost the sweetness: sigh, yet be content:
Fill here your golden urns; be fresh for ever!

XI.

I have beheld Mont Blanc, in eminence,
Though seated, over all his standing sons,
Unearthly Ermite whose cell is Heaven;
His glacier beard forth-streaming to his feet
Beyond his cloudy raiment. I have gazed
On Rome; have watched it from the Alban hill;
Have marked that Dome supreme, its mitred crown,
Dilate at sunset o'er the Latian bounds.
Byzantium I have seen: first capital
That owned the Faith; whose rising up once more

Shall be as mighty gates their 'heads uplifting'
O'er all the earth, for God to enter in.
These three have I beheld: to these henceforth
I add a fourth to stand with these for ever.
On rock or tree my name I dare not trace—
Delphi! stamp thou thine image on my heart.

KING HENRY THE SECOND AT THE TOMB OF KING ARTHUR,

AND OTHER POEMS.

To the Memory

OF

SIR WILLIAM ROWAN HAMILTON,

LATE ASTRONOMER-ROYAL OF DUBLIN,

THESE POEMS,

ORIGINALLY DEDICATED TO HIM,

ARE AGAIN INSCRIBED.

Nov. 24, 1883.

KING HENRY THE SECOND AT THE TOMB OF KING ARTHUR.

PART I.

1.

Why put the great in Time their trust?
Whate'er on earth we prize
Of dust was made, and is but dust.
For all its brave disguise.
No boor but one day with the just
May triumph in the skies!

2.

Ambition doth but chase a gleam;
An idle toy the sword!
The crown a mockery; power a dream;
For Christ alone is Lord.
This lore King Henry learned:—Of him
I will a tale record.

3.

The tourney past, in festival
Baron and knight were met:
Last pomp it was that graced the hall
Of great Plantagenet;
A Prince for valour praised by all,
More famed for wisdom yet.

4.

The board rang loud with kingly cheer:
Light jest, and laugh, and song
Rang swiftly round from peer to peer:
Alone on that gay throng
The harper looked with eye severe,
The while in unknown tongue

5

A mournful dirge abroad he poured;
Sad strains, forlorn, and slow:
Poor wreck of music prized and stored
Long centuries ago
On British hills ere Saxon sword
Had stained as yet their snow.

6.

'Strike other chords,' the monarch cried;
'Whate'er thy words may be,
They sound the dirge of festal pride:
Warriors, not monks are we!
The melodies to grief allied
No music make for me.'

7.

The harper's eye with warlike fire
One moment shone; no more:
His lips, but now compressed in ire,
A smile disdainful wore,
While forth from each resounding wire
Its fiercer soul he tore.

8.

Louder and louder pealed the strain,
More wild, and soul-entrancing:
Picturing now helmets cloven in twain;
Now swords like meteors glancing;
Now trampling hosts o'er hill and plain
Retreating and advancing.

9.

Each measure, mightier than the last,
Rushed forth, stern triumphs wooing;
Like some great angel on the blast
From Heaven to Heaven pursuing
With outspread pinion, far and fast,
A host abhorred to ruin.

10.

The bard meanwhile with cold, stern air,
Looked proudly on the proud,
Fixing unmoved a victor's stare
On that astonished crowd—
'Till all the princes gathered there
Leaped up, and cried aloud:

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11.

'What man, what chief, what crowned head,
Eternal heir of fame,
Of all that live, or all the dead,
This praise shall dare to claim?'—
Then rose that British bard, and said,
'King Arthur is his name.'

12.

'What sceptre grasped King Arthur's hand?'
'The sceptre of this Isle.'
'What nations bled beneath his brand?'
'The Saxon foe erewhile.'
'His tomb?' was Henry's next demand—
'He sleeps in yonder pile.'

13.

Forth went the King with all his train,
At the mid hour of night;
They paced in pairs the silent plain
Under the red torch-light.
The moon was sinking in her wane,
The tower yet glimmered bright.

PART II.

1.

Through Glastonbury's cloister dim
The midnight winds were sighing;
Chanting a low funereal hymn
For those in silence lying,
Death's gentle flock 'mid shadows grim
Fast bound, and unreplying.

2.

Hard by, the monks their Hours were saying;
The organ evermore
Its wave in alternation swaying
On that smooth swell upbore

The voice of their melodious praying
Towards heaven's eternal shore.

3.

Ere long a princely multitude
Moved on through arches grey
Which yet, though shattered, stand where stood
(God grant they stand for aye!)
Saint Joseph's church of woven wood
On England's baptism day.

4.

The grave they found; their swift strokes fell
Piercing dull earth and stone.
They reached ere long an oaken cell,
And cross of oak, whereon
Was graved, 'Here sleeps King Arthur well,
In the Isle of Avalon.'

5.

The mail on every knightly breast,
The steel at each man's side,
Sent forth a sudden gleam: each crest
Bowed low its plumèd pride:
Down o'er the coffin stooped a priest—
But first the monarch cried,

6.

'Great King! in youth I made a vow
Earth's mightiest son to greet;
His hand to worship; on his brow
To gaze; his grace entreat.
Therefore, though dead, till noontide thou
Shalt fill my royal seat!'

7.

Away the massive lid they rolled—
Alas! what found they there?
No kingly brow, no shapely mould;
But dust where such things were.
Ashes o'er ashes, fold on fold—
And one bright wreath of hair.

8.

Genevra's hair! like gold it lay;
For Time, though stern, is just,
And humblest things feel last his sway,
And Death reveres his trust.—
They touched that wreath; it sank away
From sunshine into dust!

9.

Then Henry lifted from his head
The Conqueror's iron crown:
That crown upon that dust he laid,
And knelt in reverence down,
And raised both hands to heaven, and said,
'Thou God art King alone!

10.

'Lie there, my crown, since God decrees
This head a couch as low!
What am I better now than these
Six hundred years ago?
Henceforth all mortal pageantries
I count an idle show.'

11.

Such words King Henry spake: and ere
The cloistral vaults had felt
Along their arches damp and bare
The last faint echo melt,
The nobles congregated there
On that cold pavement knelt:

12.

And each his coronet down laid,
And Christ his King adored;
And murmured in that mournful shade,
'Thou God alone art Lord:
Like yonder hair, at last shall fade
Each sceptre, crown, and sword.'

EPITAPH.

He roamed half round this world of woe,
Where toil and labour never cease;
Then dropped one little span below,
In search of Peace.

And now to him mild beams and showers,
All that he needs to grace his tomb,
From loneliest regions, at all hours,
Unsought-for come.

THE INFANT BRIDAL.

PART I.

1.

Of old between two nations was great war:
Its cause no mortal knew; nor when begun;
Therefore they combated so much the more,
The sire his sword bequeathing to the son;
Till gentleness and joy had wholly fled,
And wellnigh every hand with blood was red.

2.

In vain the mother wept; her sighs were blown
Away by the loud gust of popular rage;
In vain the young fair widow made her moan;
In vain the tender virgin would engage
Her love to gentler thoughts; he rushed to arms,
Proud of her beauty pale and loud alarms.

3.

Glory, for Honour a blind substitute
In hearts aspiring and a servile will,
On to the battle chased them. Man and brute,
Horseman and horse, by the same trumpet-thrill
Were borne into the frenzy of red fields,
Ghastly ere night with dead, upstaring from their shields.

4.

Glory at first, and after Glory, Shame;
Shame to propose the compact, first to bend;
And Fear, which masks full oft in Valour's name,
And doth false honour like a shade attend—
Fear to be thought to fear—these plagues did urge
The maniacs forward with a threefold scourge.

5.

Both kingdoms raging thus in fever fit,
More direful every hour became their spleen:
The sleeping boy full oft his brow would knit
Against a foeman he had never seen;
Full oft the man of venerable hairs
Bowed to the dust his head depressed by griefs and cares.

6.

Valley and town lay drowned in tears and sorrow;
Each noontide trembled with perturbed annoy,
And no one dared expect a kinder morrow:
To be a mother was no more a joy:
Hope no more hovered o'er the cradle. Love
Wept; and no friend had heart such anguish to reprove.

7.

How often to a little sleeping child,
Smiling, and sleeping on the mother's knee,
That mother thus complained; 'Ah, little child!
God only knows if it be good for thee,
My comforter, my solace, to have come
Down to this world so harsh and wearisome

8.

'Happy awhile with me thy spirit dwells;'
Awhile contented 'mid thy petty range
Of daily things, to thee all miracles;
For arms thou dost not sigh, nor pant for change;
Thy dreams are bloodless: thou dost smile when sleeping,
In Eden founts thy newborn fancies steeping.

9.

'Ah, must that brow, so clear, so smooth, so white,
By a hard ruthless helm be one day pressed?
Ah, must the red lance in its murderous might
One day pierce through and gore that tender breast?
Ah, little infant! must thou lie one day
Far, far from me, cold clay upon cold clay?

10.

'Wherefore so fast do these thy ringlets grow?
Stay, little child, be alway what thou art,
That I may ever, while the rough winds blow,
Clasp thee as now, and hide thee in my heart.
Who taught thee those new words? I fear each day,
To hear thee cry, "Mother, I must away."

11.

'Is this to be a mother? I am none—
And yet I fear to lose a gift not prized.
Is this, ah God, to have a little son?
Are these my prayers? my dreams thus realized?
Defrauded of my own while visibly here,
How can I hope, O child, to deck far off thy bier?'

PART II.

1.

The hosts, in silence marching all the night,
At sunrise met upon the battle plain.
The monarchs there engaged in single fight:
There by a rival's hand was either slain.
Long time men stood in gloom, stern, and sad-hearted;
Then, bound by solemn vows, homeward in peace departed.

2.

A counsel went there forth. Each king had left
Behind a blooming infant; one a boy,
A girl the other; both alike bereft;
Both innocent; both meet for love and joy;
Both heirs of sorrow. 'Holy Church these twain
Shall join in one,' men cried; 'and peace be ours again.'

3.

Who first devised the expedient no one knows.
Perhaps old sages, after long debate,
And loud lament of immemorial woes,
Bending their deep brows in a hall of state,
Conceived the project; and from Fancy sought
A cure for ills by rage fantastic wrought.

4.

Some chief perhaps, of all his sons bereft,
And now half blind in his forlorn old age,
Cried loud in anguish, while his tower he left
To hide him in a moss-grown hermitage,
'Hear ye my words, and on your hearts engrain them,
Love gave me many children: Hate hath slain them.'

5.

Haply some maiden, for the war deserted,
Exclaimed, 'I would that little warlike pair
Had loved as long as war the loved hath parted.'
Perhaps kind angels called her wish a prayer.
Enough: I tell an ancient legend, told
By better men than I, long dead and cold.

6.

While the young bride in triumph home was led,
They strewed beneath her litter branches green;
And kissed light flowers, then rained them on a head
Unconscious as the flowers what all might mean.
Men, as she past them, knelt; and women raised
Their children in their arms, who laughed and gazed.

7.

That pomp approaching woodland villages,
Or shadowing convents piled near rivers dim,
The church-bells from gray towers begirt with trees
Reiterated their loud, wordless hymn;
And golden cross, and snowy choir serene
Moved on, old trunks and older towers between.

8.

An hour ere sunset from afar they spied
The city walls, dark myriads round them clinging:
Now o'er a carpeted expanse they glide,
Now the old bridge beneath their tread is ringing:
They reach the gate—they pass the towers below—
And now once more emerge, a glittering show!

9.

O what a rapturous shout receives them, blending
Uncounted bells with chime of human voices!
That fortress old, as on thy wind ascending,
Like the mother of some victor chief rejoices.
From every window tapestries wave: among
The steep and glittering roofs group after group they throng.

10.

The shrine is gained. Two mighty gates expanding
Let forth a breeze of music onward gushing,
In pathos lulled, yet awful and commanding;
Down sink the crowds, at once their murmur hushing.
Filled with one soul, the smooth procession slowly
Advances with joined palms, cross-led and slowly.

11.

Lo! where they stand in yon high, fan-roofed chamber—
Martyrs and Saints in dyed and mystic glass
With sumptuous haloes, vermeil, green and amber,
Flood the far aisles, and all that by them pass:
Rich like their painter's visions—in those gleams
Blazoning the burden of his Patmian dreams!

12.

A forest of tall lights in mystic cluster
Like fire-topped reeds, from their aerial station
Pour on the group a mild and silver lustre:
Beneath the blessing of that constellation
The rite proceeds—pure source whence rich increase
Of love henceforth, and piety and peace.

13.

Small was the ring, and small in truth the finger!
What then? the faith was large that dropped it down:
A faith that scorned on this base earth to linger,
And won from Heaven a perdurable crown.
A germ of Love, at plighting of that troth
Into each bosom sank; and grew there with its growth.

14.

The ladies held aloft the bridal pair:
They on each other smiled, and gazed around
With lofty mien benign and debonair,
Their infant brows with golden circlet bound:
The prelates blessed them, and the nobles swore
True faith and fealty by the swords they bore.

15.

Home to the palace, still in order keeping,
That train returned; and in the stateliest room
Laid down their lovely burden, all but sleeping.
Together in one cradle's curtained gloom:
And lulled them with low melody and song,
And jest past lightly 'mid the courtly throng.

PART III.

11.

Ah, lovely sight! behold them—creatures twain,
Hand in hand wandering through some verdant alley,

Or sunny lawn of their serene domain,
Their wind-caught laughter echoing musically;
Or skimming, in pursuit of bird-cast shadows,
With feet immaculate the enamelled meadows.

2.

Tiptoe now stand they by some towering lily,
And fain would peer into its snowy cave:
Now, the boy bending o'er some current chilly,
The feebler backward draws him from the wave;
But he persists, and gains for her at last
Some bright flower from the dull weeds hurrying past.

3.

Oft if some aged priest the cloister crossed,
Both hands they caught; and bade him explicate,
That nought of good through idlesse might be lost,
At large all duties of the nuptial state;
And oft each other kissed with infant glee,
As though this were some great solemnity.

4.

In some old missal sometimes would they look,
Touching with awe the illuminated page;
And scarce for tears the spectacle might brook
Of babes destroyed by Herod's murderous rage.
Here sank a Martyr in ensanguined vest:
With more familiar smile there beamed the Virgin blest.

5.

Growing, their confidence as quickly grew;
Light pet and childish quarrel seldom came:

To make them lighter yet and yet more few,
Their nurse addressed them thus—an ancient dame—
'Children, what perfect love should dwell, I ween,
'Twixt husband and young wife, 'twixt King and Queen.

6.

'The turtle, widowed of her mate, no more
Lifts her lone head, but pines, and pining dies:
In many a tomb 'mid yon Cathedral hoar
Monarch or Knight beside his lady lies;
Such tenderness and truth they showed, that fate
No power was given their dust to separate.

7.

'Rachel not less, and Ruth, whereof men read
In book ordained our life below to guide,
Loved her own husband each, in word and deed,
Loved him full well, nor any loved beside:
And Orpheus too, and Pyramus, men say,
Though Paynim born, lived true, and so shall live for aye.

8.

'What makes us, children, to good Angels dear?
Unblemished Truth and hearts in pure accord:
These also draw the people to revere
With stronger faith their King and Sovereign Lord.
Then perfect make your love and amity
Alway: but most of all if men are by.'

9.

Such lore receiving ofttimes, hand in hand
Those babes walked gravely: at the garden gates

Meantime the multitude would flock and stand,
And hooded nuns looked downward from their grates.
These when the Princes marked, they moved awhile
With loftier step and more majestic smile;

10.

Or sat enthroned upon some broidered bank
(The lowlier flowers in wrecks around them thrown)
Shadowed with roses rising rank on rank:
And there, now wreathed, now leaning into one,
They talked, and kissed, again and yet again,
To please good Angels thus, and win good men.

11.

Swift rolled the years. The boy now twelve years old,
Vowed to the Cross and honourable war,
For Palestine deserts our northland cold.
Her husband—playmate—is he hers no more?
Up to his hand, now timid first she crept,—
'Farewell,' he said: she sighed; he kissed her and she wept.

12.

A milk-white steed; a crest whose snowy pride
Like wings, or maiden tresses drooped apart;
A Cross between; and (every day new dyed),
Fair emblem on his shield, a bleeding heart,
Marked him far off from all. Not mine to tell
What fields his valour won, what foes before him fell.

13.

No barbarous rage that host impelled; but zeal
For Christian faith and sacred rites profaned;
And Triumph smiled upon the avenging steel
That smote the haughty and set free the chained.
Foremost he fought. In Victory's final hour
Star-bright he shone from Salem's topmost tower!

14.

Swift as that Fame, which like an Angel ran
Before him on a glory-smitten road,
Homeward the princely boy returned, a man.
A lovelier angel graced their old abode—
But where his youthful playmate? where? half dazed,
Each on the other's beauty wondering gazed.

15.

Strange joy they found all day in wandering over
The spots in which their childish sports had been;
Husband and wife whilome, now loved and lover,
A broken light brightened yet more the scene.
Night came: a gay yet startled bride he led,
Old rites scarce trusting, to the bridal bed.

16.

No more remains of all this ancient story.
They loved with love eternal: spent their days
In peace, in good to man, in genuine glory:
No spoils unjust they sought, nor unjust praise.
Their children loved them and their people blessed—
God grant us all such lives—in Heaven for aye such rest!

QUEEN BERTHA'S MATIN SONG.

THE morning star was rising,
O'er ocean's tremulous crystal hung;
His bright feet touched the billow,
His glance o'er earth he flung;
On the young Queen he played;
Yet warm and disarrayed,
As, leaping lightly from her pillow,
The golden harp she swayed.
Hide not the clouds among,
Brightest star, and fairest!
Until her song those heavens along
Between thy wings thou bearest.

1.

'Thou that on my dreams
All night long wert beaming,
O'er shining leaves and silver streams
Brighter now art gleaming;
Every fountain hath
Light thy keen smiles give her;
In every bay-leaf's dewy bath
Thy soft swift glances quiver.'
Hide not the clouds among,
Brightest star and fairest!
Until her song those heavens along
Between thy wings thou bearest.

2.

'Heaven doth laugh above,
Earth below is gay,
And souls that walk 'twixt light and love
Shall walk in joy alway,
White as yon lily sweet,
That springs, while cold airs fan it,
A virgin spouse her mate to greet
In thee, glad matin Planet!'
Hide not the clouds among,
Brightest star and fairest!
Until her song those heavens along
Between thy wings thou bearest.

3.

'All the starry hosts,
And all the angelic band,
At once o'er all the ethereal coasts
Leaped forth at God's command;
But surely from afar
'Twas thee men saw on high,
When darkness fled before the star
Of Christ's Nativity.'
Hide not the clouds among
Brightest star and fairest!
Until her song those heavens along
Between thy wings thou bearest.

4.

'When the earth was made
Stars and angels sang;
When Christ was in the manger laid
More loud the anthem rang;

But louder yet those choirs
The last great morn shall blend
Their heavenly songs and heavenly fires,
While thou dost last ascend.'
Hide not the clouds among,
Brightest star and fairest!
Until her song those heavens along
Between thy wings thou bearest.

QUEEN BERTHA'S ALMS.

1.

Glad as that thrill some princely birth
With hushed yet rapturous omen gracing
The stir, as from her palace forth
The young fair Queen came pacing.
But here no pompous guard was set;
No flattering concourse gathered round:
The poor about her gate were met:
The readiest place the poorest found.

2.

Like youthful angels, all alert
The Queen dispensed her bounteous load;
On those whom keenest fates had hurt,
Her earlier gifts bestowed.
Her face the maniac's rage beguiled;
She turned her now among the ring,
And paused, above a poor blind child,
The sweetest of her songs to sing!

3.

Kind gifts to some, kind words to more;
Kind looks to each and all she gave,
Which on with them through life they bore,
And down into their grave.
Around her feet the children crept,
And kissed the grass those feet had trod;
Sad eyes that many a year had wept,
With tears of gladness gemmed the sod.

4.

The chiming of the convent bells
Called her at last away to prayer:
Farewell she smiled on their farewells—
And turned; when, unaware,
An old gray man with hands outspread
She marked low-bent on quivering knee:
Over his brow she stooped and said,
'A kiss is all I have for thee.'

QUEEN BERTHA AT HER VESPERS.

1.

Half kneeling yet, and half reclining,
She held her harp against her knees:
Aloft the ruddy roofs were shining,
And sunset touched the trees.
From the gold border gleamed like snow
Her foot: a crown enriched her brow:
Dark gems confined that crimson vest,
Close-moulded on her neck and breast.

2.

In silence lay the cloistral court,
And shadows of the convent towers:
Well ordered now in stately sort
Those royal halls and bowers.
The coral chaunt had just swept by—
Bright arms lay quivering yet on high:
Thereon the warriors gazed, and then
Glanced lightly at the Queen again.

3.

While from her lip the wild hymn floated,
Such grace in those uplifted eyes,
And sweet, half absent looks, they noted
That, surely, through the skies
They deemed a Spirit floated ever
Upon that song's perpetual river,
And, smiling from its joyous track,
Upon her heavenly face looked back.

QUEEN BERTHA'S VIGIL.

1.

Beneath and round her queenly bower
So tall the garden pageants grew,
With every breeze each moon-lit flower
Was waved the casement through:
White in the radiance glanced the fawn;
Flitted the hare from lawn to lawn;

By close, broad firs, that flecked the sheen,
And barred with black the silver green.

2.

Far off, like mighty cliffs, their shade
  Over a waste of waves that cast,
The castle walls o'er wood and glade
  Flung down their darkness vast.
Answering a monarch's joyous call,
Far realms were met in festival:
There flocked the noble and the fair—
The fairest, noblest was not there.

3.

And yet for her no flowers were blowing:
  No listening dell or vale profound
Enjoyed her breath: for her was flowing
  Nor glassy stream, nor stream of sound:
In vain her song the night-bird squandered:
The winds that through her chamber wandered
And o'er her pillow brushed serene,
But found the place where she had been!

4.

The Moon, whose glory swelled with light
  Each lilied slope and laurelled mound,
With touch more sharp and exquisite,
  Defined one rock cross-crowned.
Like argent flames or spires of frost
Uprose that shape of stone, embossed
With breeze-worn sculptures quaint and mild
Of Maid and Angel, King and Child.

5.

There on her knees the Queen was praying:
On that cold marble leaned her breast;
Prayer after prayer devoutly saying,
With palms together pressed.
There for her lord she prayed aloud,
Prayed for her people, blind and proud—
That Heaven would chase away their night,
That God would bathe his heart in light!

THE SOUL'S WASTE.

1.

Couldst thou but keep each noble thought
Thou fling'st in words away,
With quiet then thy night were fraught,
With glory crowned thy day.
But thou too idly and too long
From bower to bower hast ranged;
And Nature, trifled with, not loved,
Will be at last avenged.

2.

With pleasure always, ne'er with awe,
Thou gazest on the skies:
And from thy lips all zephyrs draw
Their amplest harmonies.

Beware! the hour is coming fast,
When every warbled tone,
That brims our heart with joy, shall yield
No sweetness to thine own.

GOOD AND EVIL.

Angel! beneath whose steadfast wings
The Earth revolves her wanderings;
Behold, that ancient nurse of man
Is wearied, withered, palsied, wan.
A serpent o'er her bosom crept:
A serpent stung her while she slept:
A serpent's poison taints her blood.
Therefore their wisdom mocks the wise:
Corruption near perfection lies:
Ill ends the work that well began—
Wave once thy mighty wings, and fan
The Evil from the Good!

A TRAVELLER'S GRACE.

Take, pretty birds—to you these crumbs are given—
Your portion of our meal ere yet begun:
And waft our thanks in melody to Heaven
Should we forget them, when that meal is done.

SONG.

1.

Her sable tresses swelled more bright:
New beams her dark eyes flung:
Upon her purple vest the light
Changed, shifting with her song.
Her breath like flame, now went, now came:
Strange joy her pulses shook:
While face and form gleamed wild and warm,
Like a bather's from a brook.

2.

She sang the Martyrs of the Faith!
As loud as Angel choirs
She sang the songs which they in death
Hurled, fire-like, through their fires!
But now more slow her murmurs flow:
Her smiles serenely play,
Like light on leaves a breath upheaves,
Upheaves to meet the day.

THE SOLITARY.

1.

A sad Thought came there to my breast,
And said, 'I walk the world unblest;
I pray thee, let me be thy guest.

'Each heart is full of its own care;
To me no space it deigns to spare;
A generous grief not one will bear.

'The orb of earth like night I roam:
But never found I yet a home;
Therefore at last to thee I come.'

2.

I let him in—for youth is kind;
Nor dare I call its prompture blind;
Though bitter fruits remain behind.

He stayed a day with me; and then
I could not let him go again;
I said, 'Abide a week or twain.'

All day he sang; all night he kept
His vigil near me as I slept;
Thus on into my heart he crept.

3.

He said, 'If thou my lore wilt know,
And bear my heavenly pain below,
Then thou shalt taste no baser woe.

'And, careless of thy proper weal,
Thou for thy suffering race shalt feel
Deep pity and eternal zeal.

'And, dwelling in thy place alone,
Thou shalt look down, thyself unknown,
Upon all knowledge round thee strown.'

4.

O Lady! turn those eyes away;
For when their beams upon me play,
The whole wide world grows blank and gray.

Disturb not thou a lonely fate;
A milder beauty is my mate,
And I to her am dedicate.

Pass onward, beautiful as morn!
Pass on, and shine on hearts forlorn;
Pass on from me—but not in scorn.

5.

In thee collecting all her gleams,
As from a centre Beauty beams;
I catch that light on leaves and streams.

In waving boughs and winding shells,
The grace of all thy movement dwells:
From all the birds thy music wells.

In thought familiar thus with thee,
Thine outward form I will not see;
It jars upon my reverie.

6.

Nay, oft from lifeless shapes around
My dazzled eyeballs seek the ground,
And my heart beats with awe profound.

I sit upon the dull gray shore,
And hear the infinite waters roar.
One mournful sound for evermore.

I lean upon a rock my breast;
I love its coldness, heart oppressed;
I love its hardness, and its rest.

SONG.

1.

When I was young, I said to Sorrow,
'Come, and I will play with thee:'—
He is near me now all day;
And at night returns to say,
'I will come again to-morrow,
I will come and stay with thee.'

2.

Through the woods we walk together;
His soft footsteps rustle nigh me;
To shield an unregarded head,
He hath built a winter shed;
And all night in rainy weather,
I hear his gentle breathings by me.

SONG.

1.

She says, 'Poor friend, you waste a treasure
Which you can ne'er regain,
Time, health, and glory, for the pleasure
Of toying with a chain.'

But then her voice so tender grows,
So kind and so caressing,
Each murmur from her lip that flows
Comes to me like a blessing.

2.

Sometimes she says, 'Sweet friend, I grieve you—
Alas, it gives me pain!
What can I? Ah, might I relieve you,
You ne'er had mourned in vain!'
And then her little hand she presses
Upon her heart, and sighs;
While tears, whose source not yet she guesses
Grow larger in her eyes.

3.

Sigh, sigh no longer, gentle Maiden!
For me no longer droop:
To one so poor, so sorrow-laden
They ne'er can let thee stoop.
Love ne'er can place thy hand in mine,
Thou art so high above me:
Yet might I plead with eyes like thine
I think that thou wouldst love me!

LINES.

You drop a tear for those that die:
To me, yet living, grant a sigh.
Surely they rest: no rest have I.

The sighing wind dies on the tree.
I cannot sigh : sigh thou for me.
The broken heart is sadly free.

You bid me say what I would have :
Will one flower serve ? or do I crave
A wreath—to decorate a grave ?

Fling poppies on the grave of Youth :
Fling pansies on the tomb of Truth :
On mine to-morrow morn fling both.

All day I sat below your gate,
My spirit calmed by its own weight ;
Then Sorrow grew importunate.

I rose, and on the steps I writ
These fragments of a wildered wit :
To be erased beneath your feet.

Erase them, haughty feet—I live !
I wished, not hoped, that you might grieve.
You can forget : ah then, forgive !

UNA.

A 'lovely fear,' a sweet solicitude
For others' grief is hers ; skilled are her fingers
To cool with dewy flowers the front of care,
Flattering to pleasant tears the over-worn.

She lives in her sweet maidenhood, untouched
By doubt, distrust, or pain; and gives to Heaven
Her heart, to earth her pity, to her friends
The snow-fed fountains of her fresh affections;
Seldom she weeps, and never causes tears;
Her looks are gentle, and her voice as low
As morning winds that spare the trembling dew-drops;
Her hand is lighter than a young bird's wing.
You deem her undefended. She is strong!
A glorious Spirit zoned with power and beauty!
The pure are always strong; for they possess
Youth's heaven-taught lore, and Virtue's might eterne:
And, as the ocean in the flowers of ocean,
So God within them dwells, and moves around.

IN VIA.

1.

Our vale of Life at either end
Is spanned by gates of gold;
And when the breeze against them strains
Such harmony is rolled
From every echoing valve and bar
Right on through all the vale afar,
That cliffs, and woods, the air, the ground,
With rapture tremble in the sound.

2.

This Earth is not so far from Heaven:
Bright angels from the skies,

Seen or unseen, it matters not,
Descend; and prayers uprise.
Deep Sabbath of the trusting breast,
The solstice of a realm of rest,
Rich antepasts we have in thee
Of glory and eternity!

DE VIA.

From North unto South, from the East unto the West,
There is no rest;
Wind sigheth unto wind, sea moaneth unto sea,
'Not in me,'
And the loud waves that roar
In the deep, and on the shore:—
Never, till thou resteth in the green earth's breast,
Shalt thou rest.

SONNETS.

TO

MY SISTER

THESE SONNETS ARE DEDICATED.

SONNETS.

1.

TO COLERIDGE.

Written in early youth.

As one who lies, when day is almost done,
Rocked in a little boat upon a sea
Whose glassy billows heave eternally
Albeit the winds are lulled, watching the sun
That sinks behind those billows, and anon
Uprises, while the orange gleams that dye
The long, low windows of the western sky
Are imaged in the waters smooth and wan;
Coleridge! thus hang we on the mystic traces
Of that one Thought which feeds thy soul with light;
Thus falls the 'Idea of the Infinite'
Dazzling our spirit-eyes, and up-turned faces;
Thus sinks, and reappears, and mocks our sight,
Absorbed once more in the great deep's embraces.

II.

TO E.—1.

Written in early youth.

SWEET tears commingling with our youthful smiles
Made them more balmy in life's happy dawn:
Ah, friend belovèd, whither is it gone,
That power whose infant tenderness beguiles
Our childhood's sorrows with its lovely wiles?
Still lies the dew upon our own green lawn;
The peaceful gleam can never be withdrawn
From yon dim lake, and all its glistening isles:
Yet on all these how vainly do we gaze
Seeking for something nowhere to be found;
And in the wind we listen for a sound
That now is buried with departed days;
And wonder at the smiles that strangely pass
Over the tears that lie on either wildered face.

III.

TO E.—2.

No more, O never more in wood, or wold,
Mountain, or ocean's many-coloured plain,
Or in the manners or the minds of men,
Shall we the ancient loveliness behold.
An apathetic languor, calm and cold,
Hangs upon all things with a cast of pain;
And a community of self-disdain
Is all the young inherit from the old.
Earth, full of years, and in old age forlorn,
Laments the dewy beauty of her prime,
Laments with tears, and would of thee implore
A restoration, unrestoring Time!
A restoration of her glorious morn,
And Love which, once rejected, comes no more.

IV.

TO E.—3.

Sorrow and joy mature the growth of love:
Love, nursed by joy alone, is poor and weak:
'Tis not that we together sought and seek
Those streams of song whose fountains are above;
It is not kindred minds alone which move
In us a love that must for aye endure:
Nor kindred hopes that blend in rhythm pure,
Nor charm of childish memories interwove,
Nor those sweet names of sister and of brother,
Alone; the grave endears us to each other;
The mournful separation which must come
When eyes wax dim, and fondest lips are dumb:—
We love the golden calm before the storm,
And turn to clasp once more the hand which yet is warm.

V.

TO E.—4.

The ocean murmurs on his circling shores—
Where is the ear that catches as a whole
That never-ceasing sound from pole to pole?
The sun upon a thousand empires pours
At once his beams in unexhausted stores;
But who—what mortal eye, what human soul,
Beholds that light on all those empires roll,
And on the intermediate ocean floors?
We see but the detail of things; too near
We stand to comprehend their harmony:
Hereafter happy in some nobler state
Of being we shall turn and contemplate
The moral planet of Humanity
In the bright fulness of its perfect sphere.

VI.

ART AND SCIENCE.

A WILD swan and an eagle side by side
I marked, careering o'er the ocean-plain,
Emulous a loftier zenith each to gain,
Circling in orbits wider and more wide:
Highest, methought, through tempest scarce descried,
One time the bird of battle soared;—in vain;
So soon, exhausted 'mid their joy and pride,
Dropp'd the bright rivals, vanquished, to the main.
Then, o'er the mighty waves around them swelling,
That snowy nursling of low lakes her song
Lifted to God, floating serene along;
While she that in the peaks had made her dwelling
Struggled in vain her wings to beat and quiver,
And the sea closed o'er that bright crest for ever.

VII.

TO POWER.

WHERE art thou? In the winds when they awake
Man's soul, and with their sevenfold harmonies
Admonish him from regions far, and break
The frozen trance in which his spirit lies.
Where art thou? In all Nature while her hues
Sink into Man's deep spirit; thence to rise
In branching thoughts, as evening's buried dews
Emerge from earth in flowers of heavenly dyes.
Where art thou? With the Muse when she is raising
Unto the Poet's ear her unseen shell,
Which charms to movements smooth with potent spell
The Visions from his brain their progress tracing!
There—not in battle-fields—O Power, thou art—
An Eagle brooding o'er the world's wide heart.

VIII.

A TRANCED beauty dwells upon her face,
A lustrous summer-calm of peace and prayer;
In those still eyes the keenest gaze can trace
No sad disturbance, and no touch of care.
Peace rests upon her lips, and forehead fair,
And temples unadorned. A cloistral grace
Says to the gazer over-bold, 'Beware,'
Yet love hath made her breast his dwelling-place.
An awful might abideth with the pure,
And theirs the only wisdom from above.
She seems to listen to some strain obscure
Of music in sidereal regions wove,
Or to await some more transcendent dower
From heaven descending on her like a dove.

IX.

SHE sat amid a soft-eyed company
Of little children, whom she taught to love
That God who deigned a child on earth to move,—
And, loving Him, to fear. Hand, lip, and eye,
And many a smile and sometimes a short sigh
Were beautiful to incite and to reprove;
And with that holier wisdom from above
Enlarge our sorrowful humanity.
And yet, O blameless, and thyself a child!
How canst thou teach? Thy rosy lips make sweet
The faults they fain would chide! Of all that group
The timidest such wrath as thine would meet
Gladly, if so that dovelike hand might droop
Upon her shoulder or her tresses wild.

X.

Happy are they who kiss thee, morn and even,
Parting the hair upon thy forehead white:
For them the sky is bluer and more bright,
And purer their thanksgivings rise to Heaven.
Happy are they to whom thy songs are given;
Happy are they on whom thy hands alight:
And happiest they for whom thy prayers at night
In tender piety so oft have striven.
Away with vain regrets and selfish sighs—
Even I, dear friend, am lonely, not unblest:
Permitted sometimes on that form to gaze,
Or feel the light of those consoling eyes:
If but a moment on my cheek it stays
I know that gentle beam from all the rest!

XI.

She whom this heart must ever hold most dear,
This heart in happy bondage held so long,
Began to sing. At first a gentle fear
Rosied her countenance, for she is young,
And he who loves her most of all was near:
But when at last her voice grew full and strong,
O! from their ambush sweet, how rich and clear
Leaped the bright notes abroad—a rapturous throng!
Her little hands were sometimes flung apart,
And sometimes palm to palm together prest;
While wave-like blushes rising from her breast
Kept time with that aerial melody;
A music to the sight!—I standing nigh
Received the falling fountain in my heart.

XII.

Flowers I would bring if flowers could make thee
fairer,
And music, if the Muse were dear to thee;
(For loving these would make thee love the bearer)
But sweetest songs forget their melody,
And loveliest flowers would but conceal the wearer:—
A rose I marked, and might have plucked; but she
Blushed as she bent, imploring me to spare her,
Nor spoil her beauty by such rivalry.
Alas! and with what gifts shall I pursue thee,
What offerings bring, what treasures lay before thee;
When earth with all her floral train doth woo thee,
And all old poets and old songs adore thee;
And love to thee is nought; from passionate mood
Secured by joy's complacent plenitude!

XIII.

Let me be near thee, and I will not touch
Thy hand; or grieve thee with reproach or praise;
Or look into thine eyes. Is this too much?
Sweet Lady, say not so, for I would gaze
On thee for ever. Be but what thou art,
A Beauty shrined within a silver haze;
And in the silence let me fill my heart
With memories calmly stored for wintry days.
O Lady! there is sorrow here below;
And gladness seldom comes, and cannot last:
Thou art all summer: thou wilt never know
The cold and cloudy skies which I forecast:
Deny not thou long years of future woe
Their comfort sad and sole—a happy Past.

XIV.

You say the Past is dead. It cannot die:
Life makes immortal what it breathes upon.
Last night, whilst I was slumbering restlessly,
Dark Forms, attired like mourners, one by one,
Drew near, and bound me with unaltered eye.
They stood a long and melancholy train:
At last I spake: 'Ye ministers of Pain!
I know you, and your aspect stern and high.
Ye are the Phantoms of departed Hours.'
They sank; but sent, instead, a dense array
Of shadows gathered from their dreariest bowers—
Forms, faces, scenes forgotten many a day,
That seemed before my eyes to reel and swim,
Like objects seen through sounding harp-strings dim.

XV.

Silence and Sleep, and Midnight's softest gloom!
Consoling friends of fast declining years;
Benign assuagers of unfruitful tears;
Soft-footed heralds of the wished-for tomb!
Go to your master Death, the Monarch whom
Ye serve; whose majesty your grace endears;
And in the awful hollows of his ears
Murmur, O ever murmur,—'Come, O come!'
Virginal rites have I performed full long,
And all observance worthy of a bride.
Then wherefore, Death, dost thou to me this wrong,
So long estranged to linger from my side?
Am I not thine? O breathe upon my eyes
A gentle answer, Death, from thine Elysian skies!

XVI.

Pause, lovely Lady, pause: with downward eye
Regard this humble tomb awhile; and read
The name of him who loved you well, now freed
From pains of love—Ah, mournful liberty!
Sigh forth, too late, an unavailing sigh:
And, if thy spirit be to pity moved,
Pray that a ceaseless dream of her he loved
Abide upon him everlastingly.
Stay, lovely Lady, stay: O stay for hours:
I feel thy tear-drops falling one by one.
Yet do not stay, for grief and shame it were
That tears should fall so fast from eyes so fair;
And feet that scarcely bend the meadow flowers
Linger so long upon the chilling stone.

XVII.

TO A SCEPTIC.

How oft that haughty and far-flashing eye,
Have I not seen thee to the wide heavens raise,
Or on the dark earth root thy tyrannous gaze
As on a scroll with piercing scrutiny!
Great scorn it seemed and great indignity
That aught should mock thy search:—and yet that haze
Which veils the loftiest, deepest things, obeys,
Be sure, the cloud-compelling Power on high.
Our life is finite—let the mind be so;
And therefore bound the Spirit's appetites:
Some things we cannot, some we should not know;
Wisdom there is that weakens, lore that blights—
He too that walks among the eternal lights
Casts, as He moves, His shadow oft below!

XVIII.

A CHURCHYARD.—1.

It stands a grove of cedars vast and green,
Cathedral-wise disposed, with nave and choir,
And cross-shaped transept lofty and serene;
And altar decked in festival attire
With flowers like urns of white and crimson fire;
And chancel girt with vine-trailed laurel screen;
And aisles high arched with cypresses between;
Retreats of mournful love, and vain desire.
Within the porch a silver fount is breathing
Its pure, cold dews upon the summer air:
Round it are blooming herbs, and flowers, the care
Of all the angels of the Seasons, wreathing
Successively their unbought garniture
Round the low graves of the beloved poor.

XIX.

A CHURCHYARD.—2.

But when the winds of night begin to move
Along the murmuring roofs, deep music rolls
Through all the vaults of this Cathedral grove;
A midnight service for departed Souls.
Piercing the fan-like branches stretched above
Each chapel, oratory, shrine, and stall
Then a pale moonshine falls or seems to fall
On those cold grave-stones—altars reared by love
For a betrothal never to be ended;
And on the slender plants above them swinging;
And on the dewy lamps from these suspended;
And sometimes on dark forms in anguish clinging,
As if their bosoms to the senseless mould
Some vital warmth would add—or borrow of its cold.

XX.

TO ——.

Armoury of impenetrable mail
Is thine: and hath been ever from the womb:
Loosen not, till thou loosenest for the tomb
The sevenfold harness of that iron scale:
For many are there watchful to assail
The mighty, and to speed the flying doom
In all those fits of weakness or of gloom
Which o'er the loftiest head at times prevail.
Not only Passion's Furies—Jealousies,
The heart's Hell-fires; Suspicion, Fear, and Hate:
But Languors unheroic; Sympathies
That, promising to soften, enervate;
Desires that over earth and ocean roam;
And Love, which here beneath should never make
her home.

XXI.

FAME.

Aspiring souls! henceforward without blame
Revere in faith, and fearlessly obey
That generous impulse which inspires your way:
Glory your spur may be, though not your aim.
Love hath its archetype, nor less hath Fame
In Heaven; there shines the light whereof one ray
Is Fame below: re-echoed thence for aye,
Spread the great echoes of God's sacred Name.
God's living Words through all the worlds sent forth,
Support those worlds by them ordained and made:
True Glory is God's sentence, rightly weighed:
His Lips establish all things: and His Eyes
Kindle the universal sacrifice,
And everlasting, of the Heavens and Earth!

XXII.

TO A JUST LAWYER (EDWARD O'BRIEN).*

'DEFRAUDED Justice, long a wanderer driven
From Law, her Temple, holy kept of old,
Though now the money-changers' strongest hold,
Invoked not vainly aid from thee: and Heaven
To thee that voice heroical hath given
Wherewith to all thy brethren thou hast called,
Standing alone among them disenthralled,
All chains of custom, fear, and interest riven.
Young Priest of Justice, what was their reply?
'Justice herself this human sacrifice
Requires: if thou wouldst serve her, rob and lie,
So keeps the State function and equipoise'—
Such answer thou didst scorn; and hast for this,
Attained, fully to see its utter hollowness.

1839.

XXIII.

VIRGIN from Fame, and widowed of his Love,
As for life's baser objects all too high,
He lived alone, and fixed a steadfast eye
On the fair prospects of the world above.
Over earth's foreground poor of hill and grove
The streams of sunset, and the starry sky
He watched; and he had heard that harmony
Which Spirits leave behind where'er they move.
Men said he was a Visionary. True:
He was such, for the deep and precious things
Most real, ever stood before his view:
His tendency was upward: without wings
His sympathies ascended—yet below
Where Duty called him, he was prompt to go.

* Author of "The Lawyer."

XXIV.

Blessed is he who hath not trod the ways
Of secular delights, nor learned the lore
Which loftier minds are studious to abhor:
Blessed is he who hath not sought the praise
That perishes, the rapture that betrays;
Who hath not spent in Time's vainglorious war
His youth; and found, a schoolboy at fourscore,
How fatal are those victories which raise
Their iron trophies to a temple's height
On trampled Justice; who desires not bliss,
But peace; and yet when summoned to the fight,
Combats as one who combats in the sight
Of God, and of His Angels, seeking this
Alone, how best to glorify the right.

XXV.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

A cedar-cone from Carmel! stored with seeds
Which, might they ripen in the sun and dew
Of our ungenial West, ere long would strew
Our desolate mountains, and o'er-shade our meads
With forests such as earth no longer feeds!
Could man once more that primal growth renew
Then God's immortal breeze would wander through
Their midnight boughs—that vital spirit which breeds
Life without end. And be it known to you,
Ye who would build, that with this wood alone,
Sacred, eternal, incorruptible,
That House in which the Holy One will dwell
Must shape her chambers; and with blocks of stone
As noiselessly raised up as those great forests grew.

XXVI.

THE SPIRITUAL TIES REHEARSED IN THE NATURAL.

FATHER !—the childless Angels cannot call
Upon their God, by that most sacred name!
Brother !—the seed of Adam, one and all,
With Christ Himself true brotherhood we claim.
King, Prophet, Priest! the whole predestined frame
Of life in one symbolic mould is cast;
To prove of Heaven a mystic antepast,
And a pure language to reveal the same.
But we have scorned that old and simple life;
And, building social Babels, fain to reach
Yea storm high Heaven itself, through hate and strife
Confused that Catholic and Godlike speech:
Therefore God's face is dark as in a glass
To us: the Patriarchs saw Him face to face.

XXVII.

'THE FLESH IS WEAK.'

WHAT man can hear sweet sounds and dread to die?
O for a music that might last for ever
Abounding from its sources like a river
Which through the dim lawns streams eternally!
Virtue might then uplift her crest on high,
Spurning those myriad bonds that fret and grieve her;
Then all the powers of Hell, rebuked, would quiver
Before the ardours of her awful eye.
Alas for Man with all his high desires,
And inward promptings fading day by day!
High-titled honour pants while it expires;
And clay-born glory turns again to clay.
Low instincts last: our great resolves pass by
Like winds whose loftiest pæan ends but in a sigh.

XXVIII.

THE DYING PLATONIST.

FAIN would I call that night which spreads so fast
Out of the vault of Death's abysmal skies,
A gentle gloom like that of thy dark eyes:
Fain would I say that we, like children, cast
Our blind-fold faces with a timid haste
Into a mother's lap—ere long to rise
Some little forfeit and some sweet surprise
The playful future of a playful past.
But ah! it is not so. Reality
Makes a dread language of this ebbing breath;
Preaching those awful homilies of Death
Which sound so like each other at their close.
The least of Sins is *Infinite:* it throws
A shade into the face of the Most High.

XXIX.

RELIGIOUS LITERATURE.

STRANGER! yet friend! who from the ways unblest
Of common life retired, art pleased to rove
The autumnal alleys of this 'Golden Grove,'[1]
By woodland odours, sportive gleams carest,
That lure thee forward in thine easy quest
Of Wisdom bowered with Beauty and with Love:
Beware! a presence that thou deemest not of
Is here concealed. From out the air-rocked nest
Of every leaf, looks forth some Dream divine:
The grass thou treadest—the weeds, are cyphered o'er
With mystic traces, and sibylline lore:
Each branch is precious as that golden bough
Hung by Æneas, ere he passed below,
Upon the sable porch of Proserpine.

[1] A work of Jeremy Taylor's bears this title.

XXX.

RELIGIOUS ANTIQUARIANISM.

I saw a wild-swan flying toward the West,
Following the traces of a sunken Sun:
The sky grew momently more pale; yet on
She urged her indefatigable quest;
Faint crimson lights suffusing still that breast,
Out of whose deep recesses forth she flung
Exhausted wailings of immortal song,
Wind-scattered dirges, psalmody unblest!
Sad lover of the Past! in vain that flight!
A law there is that bids the earth roll round,
And marvellously marries day and night,
The first, and last. Yet drop not to the ground!
Once more the orb thou lovest on thee shall rise,
Far-shining from the East of thine abandoned skies.

XXXI.

STORM AND STABILITY.

Now, now, ye kings and rulers of the earth,
Lift up your eyes unto the hills eterne,
Whence your salvation comes. From Earth's dark urn
The great floods burst! From each ancestral hearth
Look forth ye bold and virtuous poor, look forth:
The meteor signs of woes to come discern;
And whence the danger be not slow to learn:
Then greet it with loud scorn, and warlike mirth.
The banner of the Church is ever flying!
Less than a storm avails not to unfold
The Cross emblazoned there in massy gold—
Away with doubts and sadness, tears and sighing:
It is by faith, by patience, and by dying,
That we must conquer, as our sires of old!

XXXII.

THE BEATIFIC VISION OF THE EARTH.—1.

Glad childhood's dream of marvels past, we rise,
Still on our cheeks the flush of sleep remaining;
And roam the waste of Earth, our eyelids straining
The glories of that dream to realise.
Nor seek in vain. Stream, bird, or cloud replies,
Echoes that mock young passion's amorous feigning,
Fancy shines starlike forth 'mid daylight waning,
And Hope the night-bird sings 'neath shrouded skies.
At last the charm is broken: day by day
Drops some new veil, until the countenance bare
Of that ice-idol, blank Reality,
Confronts us full with cold, and loveless eye—
Then dies our heart, unless that faith we share
Whose touch makes all things gold, and gives us youth for aye.

XXXIII.

THE BEATIFIC VISION OF THE EARTH.—2.

Hail Earth, for man's sake cursed, yet blessing man!
The Saviour trod thine herbage, breathed thine air:
Henceforward, not alone through symbols, fair,
Thou showest, delivered from thine ancient ban,
Memorial bloom withheld since death began:
Thy Maker's glory formed at last to share
Even now that light transfiguring thou dost wear
For us, which once adorned His forehead wan.
'All things are new.' O sing it, heavenly choirs!
And ye, the choir of God's great Church below,
The Poets! sound it on your deep-toned lyres:
From every mountain-top the tidings blow:
'All things are new.' The Earth hath thrown aside
Her mourning weeds, and sits a pale, and veilèd bride.

XXXIV.

THE BEATIFIC VISION OF THE EARTH.—3.

Cowering beneath a semilucid veil,
A semilucid bridal veil of snow,
Which from the wreath that binds her temples pale
Down to her white and slender feet doth flow,
She sits. I hear her breathings soft and low:
They shake the vine-leaves in that garland frail—
Like Mary's when she heard th' Angelic 'Hail,'
Dimly I see her blushes come and go.
And now, that veil thrown back, her head she raises,
Fixing upon the stars her starlike eyes:
As though she felt that Heaven on which she gazes
Her bosom rises: lo! her hands, they rise:
She also rises. Time it is to meet
Her Lord, and bless 'the light of His returning feet.'

XXXV.

THE CONSTELLATION OF THE PLOUGH.

Type of celestial labour, toil divine,
That nightly downward from the glistening skies
Showerest thy light on these expectant eyes,
Around thee in their stations ever shine
Full many a radiant shape and emblemed sign,
Swords, sceptres, crowns, bright tresses, galaxies—
Whatever Song can raise, or Thought devise,
Yet none, methinks, so truly great as thine.
On, ever on! while He who guides thee flings
His golden grain along the azure way
Do thou thy sleepless work, and toiling, say,
'O men, so sedulous in trivial things,
Why faint amid your loftier labours? Why
Forget the starry seed and harvests of the sky?'

XXXVI.

HUMAN LIFE.

Sad is our youth, for it is ever going,
Crumbling away beneath our very feet;
Sad is our life, for onward it is flowing,
In current unperceived because so fleet;
Sad are our hopes, for they were sweet in sowing,
But tares, self-sown, have overtopped the wheat;
Sad are our joys, for they were sweet in blowing;
And still, O still, their dying breath is sweet:
And sweet is youth, although it hath bereft us
Of that which made our childhood sweeter still;
And sweet our life's decline, for it hath left us
A nearer Good to cure an older Ill;
And sweet are all things, when we learn to prize them
Not for their sake, but His who grants them or denies them.

XXXVII.

FORTITUDE.

Man's mind should be of marble, not of clay:
A rock-hewn temple, large, majestic, bare;
Not decked with gewgaws, but with life-long care
And toil heroic shaped to stand for aye:
Not like those plaster baubles of the day,
In which the lightest breath of praise or prayer
Crumbles the gauds wherewith they garnished are:
In which we dare not think, and cannot pray;
In which God will not dwell. O Constancy!
Where thou art wanting all our gifts are naught!
Friend of the martyrs—both of those who die,
And those who live—beneath that steadfast eye
The breast-plates and the beaming helms were wrought
Of all our far-famed Christian chivalry!

XXXVIII.

MEDITATION.

WHAT is more glorious than a noble Thought?
What is more blessed?—In that thought to dwell!
To build your bower within it; scoop a cell;
Inlay with precious ores a secret grot
With mossy seats around: to wander not;
But lean in peace above its caverned well,
Passive to that pure runnel's murmuring spell,
Or sound of sighing forests heard remote.
Such holy promptings moved of old our sires
Those vast cathedrals cruciform to raise
Which make us dwell *within* the Cross: and still,
Sweet as the gradual breeze from all their choirs
Moving with dawning day o'er wood and hill,
The thoughts by those grey Minsters quickened to God's praise!

XXXIX.

SORROW.

COUNT each affliction, whether light or grave,
God's messenger sent down to thee; do thou
With courtesy receive him; rise and bow;
And, ere his shadow pass thy threshold, crave
Permission first his heavenly feet to lave;
Then lay before him all thou hast: Allow
No cloud of passion to usurp thy brow,
Or mar thy hospitality; no wave
Of mortal tumult to obliterate
The soul's marmoreal calmness: Grief should be,
Like joy, majestic, equable, sedate,
Confirming, cleansing, raising, making free;
Strong to consume small troubles; to commend
Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end.

XL.

EVANESCENCE OF THE PATRIARCHAL RELIGION.

HERMES! unearthly were those melodies
That closed the lids of Argus! one by one
His hundred orbs, by a sweet force pressed down,
Yielding successively, like Heaven's bright eyes
When moonlight spreads along her glistening skies:
Smiling he sank, more pleased the more undone,
Inebriate, while through those thin lids the sun
Shone warmly without light!—thy sorceries,
Faith of the Pagan world, so fair of old,
Worked like those songs! Procession, Legend, Rite,
Sapped thus transmitted Truth by spells of Art:
Till the ever-waking spirit in man's heart
Relinquished at the last its sacred hold
Of God's prime creature, beatific Light!

XLI.

VIGILANCE.

VIRGIN! at placid morn, and when the airs
Of evening fan her flushed and throbbing sky,
Send up, like doves, thy homeward thoughts on high,
And mingle with those gentle thoughts thy prayers.
Blameless thou art: but One there is who dares
Assail for ever, and remorselessly
The soul of finest grain and purest dye,
And in the softest herbage sprinkles tares.
Virgin! that Power which sends the winds of Even
To rock the blossoms on the boughs of May,
That Power the Spirits of the Mind obey,
And come and go at His command alone:
Yea, but for Him the loftiest star of Heaven
Would drop, supplanted, from his glittering throne.

XLII.

PROVIDENCE.

PROVIDENCE is that thread on which are strung
Like beads, all Acts and Epochs great and small,
Where diamonds glitter at wide interval
The sanguine and the sable gems among.
'Wreathe it to one wide crown, and be it hung
Henceforth aloft in Time's memorial hall,
Suspend it o'er the symbol of the Fall;'
This is the burden of the angelic song.
But we must live by Faith: waiting the time
Solemnly set apart in God's great plan
For joining the beginning and the ending:
Then Truth and Love and Joy with choral blending
Shall chaunt the mythic tale of Earth: then Man
Shall mark the metre and recurrent rhyme.

XLIII.

UNIVERSAL HISTORY.

METHOUGHT I gazed upon a dusky Round,
Our mortal planet's monumental urn:
Around its orb with many a spiral turn
Ascending, a Procession slowly wound:
There saw I laurelled poets, kings renowned;
Prophets I saw from earth's remotest bourne:
There saw I maids and youths, old men forlorn,
And conquerors full-armed, and captives bound.
A Funeral pomp methought it seemed far down
In pale relief; and, side by side, therein
Hooded, there paced, a Sorrow and a Sin:
Midway in ampler ring, and vision clear,
A Sacrifice embraced that mighty sphere:
Above, a lovely Bridal was its crown.

XLIV.

TRUTH.

Centre of Earth; keystone of Heaven's great dome!
In thee the world's vast arches rest suspended:
Within thy zodiac's belt round all extended
The orb of Knowledge evermore doth roam:
Thou art the lamp and hearth of each man's home—
How many wondrous powers in thee are blended!
By thee we live; by thee from death defended
We find a second cradle in the tomb.
In thee all good things breathe, without thee die:
Strength, Justice, Loyalty, Truth's noble thrall,
Song, Science, all the Loves; yea most of all,
Though deemed too oft thy rival, Charity,
Whose golden arrows swift as sunbeams fly,
And scatter seeds of life where'er they fall!

XLV.

NATIONAL STRENGTH.

What is it makes a Nation truly great?
Her sons; her sons alone; not theirs, but they:
Glory and gold are vile as wind and clay
Unless the hands that grasp them, consecrate.
And what is that in man by which a State
Is clad in splendour like the noontide day?
Virtue: Dominion ebbs, and Arts betray;
Virtue alone endures. But what is that
Which Virtue's self doth rest on; that which yields her
Light for her feet, and daily, heavenly bread;
Which from demoniac pride, and madness shields her,
And storms that most assail the loftiest head?

The Christian's humble faith; that faith which cheers
The orphan's quivering heart and stays the widow's
tears.

XLVI.

HONOUR.

Bright and majestic Spirit! faithful mate
Of all true Virtue, and that generous Fame
Which guards a spotless, seeks a glorious name
From Love not Pride; but seeks content to wait
And prompt to share it: Angel of the State!
Sanctioning Order with religious awe;
Taking the harshness and the sting from Law,
Scorn from the lowly, envy from the great:
Come to this region of thine ancient sway!
With thy heroic and inspiring smile
Illume our perils and our fears beguile!
Was it not here that Alfred built his throne,
And high-souled Sidney waived a throne away?—
The land is strong which thou hast made thine own.

THE FALL OF RORA.

(THE LAST SCENE OF A LYRICAL DRAMA WRITTEN IN YOUTH.)

Caverned rocks in the mountains above Rora.—Chorus of Virgins and Wives—Old Men, Children.

A GIRL.

It thunders!

AN OLD MAN.

No, it is their meeting.

A WOMAN.

Ah!
Thus far, beyond the sight of this great onset
To wait the issue in suspense, and hear
No sound, but those fierce shouts, and our hearts' beating!
Hurl down, O wind, yon rocks! their jagged pines
Leave half the vale exposed, yet hide the battle!

SECOND WOMAN.

A tenfold shout—now, now they meet. O heaven!

CHORUS.

Clouds above the dark vale streaming!
Onward rushing, swift and free!
Oh! that, as a mirror gleaming,
You might show us all you see!
Glittering heralds you should be
Of a sun-bright victory!

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Now the battle hosts are meeting;
Tangled now in mazy error;
Like whirlpools down a river fleeting—
I am blind with doubt and terror.
Better death, than doubt. O cease!
Be still, my heart, or burst. Peace, peace!

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Darkness and storm before him driven,
Ascending ever high and higher,
Yon Eagle cleaves the clouded heaven:
Lo! now sun-smitten, like a pyre
He burns! auspicious omen! we
Behold our Fate and Fame in thee!

FIRST GIRL.

Have we judged well?

SECOND GIRL.

To give up all at once!
The thought is glorious—

WOMEN.

But the act! woe, woe!

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

I heard a voice: the clouds were fled;
All heaven hung vast and pure o'erhead;
The mountain rock, and mountain sod,
Lay steadfast, as the throne of God!
I heard a voice: it spake to me,
Far murmuring, 'One hath died for thee,
That thou shouldst live both just and free.'

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

'For how,' that deep voice murmured—'how
Shall man to God his forehead bow,
If, bent beneath a Power unjust,
For aye it grovel in the dust?
Or how expand a chain-worn breast
For Christ therein, an equal guest,
To find his temple and his rest?'

FIRST WOMAN.

Alas! and see you those poor children straying
Still on, by cavern, brake, and rifted pine?
They seek, but hope no more to find the maid.
(*Children pass through the caverns singing.*)

1.

We have sought her in her bower;
In the garden we have sought her:
In the forest, hour by hour,
We have sought the chieftain's daughter.
She that was to us so tender,
Answer now she gives us none:
She is gone we know not whither:
If we knew where she is gone,

We would gather flowers, and send her
Those she loved, the last to wither.
Agnes! our belovèd! come
To thy children and thy home!

2.

She was not like others, gay—
But the mirthful loved her sadness:
And the mourner oft would say,
None could yield so soft a gladness.
As a star, remote and lonely,
Piercing depths of midnight woods,
Makes the dark leaves dance in lightness;
So into dejected moods,
She, that mournful lady only,
Shone with beams of heavenly brightness.
Agnes, O belovèd! come
To thy children and thy home!

3.

O belovèd Agnes! where,
Where art thou so long delaying?
O'er what mountains bleak and bare
Are thy tender feet a-straying?
They have told us thou art taken
To some palace white like snow;
And some think that thou art sleeping
This we know not; but we know,
Every morning when we waken,
All our lids are wet with weeping.
O belovèd Agnes! come
To thy children and thy home!

CHORUS.

Hark, hark the Storm! the voice not long
Outstrips the Presence: see you now,
Not leaves alone, but branch and bough!
They roof the glen, a rushing throng,
Fast borne in current fierce and strong:
The cliffs that wall the vale are shaking:
The forests to their heart are quaking:
Crouch in caves who will: but I
Exulting pace this platform high!
My panting soul, with joy o'er-awed,
I cast upon the storm abroad:
And soon will hurl, inspired by wrong,
Thereon my vengeance and my Song!

A WOMAN.

Is it the gasping of the storm
That makes her wan cheek red and warm?
Lo! how she fixes now her eyes—

CHORUS.

Catching the quickening impulse from those kindling skies!
See, see the storm grows radiant now,
As radiant as a lifted brow
Too long abased! lo, fast and wide,
Avenging Forms the tempest ride;
And answer, round, above, and under,
With choruses of rapturous thunder!
Burst on the tyrant, Storm from God!
Hurl them like leaves from rock to rock!
Trample them down through clay and sod:
From dark to dark!—their banners mock

The purple and the blood-stained gold
Thy clouds have righteously unrolled—

A WOMAN.

She lifts her hands, and far away
Flings forth the ban!

CHORUS.

1.

For Tyrants say
That men were shaped but to obey:
Dead spokes alone, to roll and reel
Within their car's revolving wheel!
Let them take heed, for they have driven
In frenzy o'er the rocky plain,
Till earth's deep groans are heard in heaven,
And fire bursts from those wheels amain.
Not soon the stormy flames expire
When hearts contagious in their ire
Burst forth, like forests catching fire!

2.

Or else this madness preys upon their spirit—
That all good things to man's estate which fall
Drop from their sacred prescience: they inherit
Wisdom divine to nurse this mundane ball!
Yea, they apportion times; with care dispensing
The seasons; when to sow, what days for reaping,
What space for food and labour, praying, sleeping;
With stellar beams our harvests influencing;
Forth from the heaven of high conceit diffusing
Sunshine and breeze amid our murmuring grain;
Showering the former and the latter rain—
Or else with groans their vacant hours amusing,

And sending forth a famine, to fulfil
On men of froward heart the counsels of their will!
Such airy dream to realise,
All rights, all instincts they despise;
On every hearth they plant a foot,
Importunate, impure, and brute:
Round every bed a serpent creeps:
They make along the venomed wall
The hundred-footed Whisper crawl—
But Vengeance in a moment leaps
Forth from the frowning caverns of her noontide sleeps!

FIRST WOMAN.

How her high passion teems with thoughts as high:
Like fire from Earth's deep heart quickening the seeds
In some volcanic soil to stateliest growth!
Flushed is her cheek with crimson as she cow'rs
Beneath their umbrage!

CHORUS.

Ha! how well
That Chief made answer. At the door
The herald stood, and shook all o'er;
And spake: 'These tumults thou shalt quell;
Or else, a deep oath I have sworn,
Thy wife, the children of thy joy,
With fire in vengeance to destroy.'
Then made he answer, without scorn:
'Their flesh thou mayest consume; Time must:
But I commend their spirits
To God, in whom we trust.'

WOMEN.

See, see that man! he's hurt—how goes the battle?

MESSENGER.

Thrice have they rushed upon us: thrice fled back:
They form for the last onset. Arnold sent me—
He prays you to remove.

WOMEN.

We will not stir!
Why should we move?

MESSENGER.

The fight is worse than doubtful:
Fresh troops are pouring on us—Christoval—
Mario—the rest—have burst into the valley
From every entrance. We are girt—surrounded—

CHORUS.

Smooth song no more; an idle chime!
'Tis ours, 'tis ours, ere yet we die,
To hurl into the tide of Time
The bitter Book of Prophecy.
For ages we have fought this fight;
For ages we have borne this wrong:
How long, Holy and Just! how long,
Shall lawless might oppress the right?

No dreamy influence numbs my song!
Too long suspended it has hung
Like glaciers bending in their trance
From cliffs, some hornèd valley's wall;
One flash, from God one ireful glance,
To vengeful plagues hath changed them all:
Down, headlong torrents—'tis your hour
Of triumph—on the Invading Power!

Woe, woe to Tyrants! Who are they?
Whence come they? Whither are they sent?
Who gave them first their baleful sway
O'er ocean, isle, and continent?
Wild beasts they are, ravening for aye;
Vultures that make the world their prey;
Pests, ambushed in the noontide day;
Ill stars of ruin and dismay;
Tempestuous winds that plague the ocean:
Hoar waves along some rock-strewn shore
That rush and race, with dire commotion
Raking those rocks in blind uproar!

FIRST WOMAN.

She sings aright: this music of her anger
Makes my blood leap like founts from the warm earth:
My chill is past.

SECOND WOMAN.

'Tis well. We shall die free!

CHORUS.

As though this Freedom they demand of us
Were ours, at will to keep or to bestow!
To them a boon profane, a gift of woe;
For us a loss fatal and blasphemous!
This Freedom—man's dread Birthright of the Soul—
It is not man's, nor under man's control:
From God it comes; His prophet here, and martyr;
Which when He gives to man, man's sword must guard:
No toy for sport; no merchandise for barter;
A duty, not a boast; the Spirit's awful ward!—

Dread, sullen stillness, what art thou portending?
Once more each word I mutter on mine ear,
Forward in anguish bending,
Drops resonant and clear—
The forest wrecks, each branch and bough,
O'er voiceless caves lie silent now:
No sound, except the wind's far wail,
Forth issuing through the portals of the vale,
Now low, now louder and more loud,
Under the bridge-like archway of yon low-hung cloud!

FIRST WOMAN.

O God, what light is that? See, see, it spreads!
The vale is all one flame—the clouds catch fire—
Our hearths, our homes! all lost—gone, gone, for ever!

SECOND WOMAN.

It wakes another tempest! From the gorges
And deep glens on all sides the winds come rushing,
And mate themselves unto that terrible flame,
As we shake hands fiercely with our despair!
Lo, once again that sound! that flame, behold!
Once more it leaps off from its burning altar
Up, up, to heaven—

CHORUS.

To be our witness there!

A SECOND MESSENGER.

Arnold is dead! He felt the wound was mortal:
Then stood he up from slaying of his foes,
And smiled, and gave this staff to me, and said:
'If there be yet one free spot left on Earth,

Let them plant there this staff—
And there, not on my grave, remember me!'

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Boast not, haughty conqueror!
Not from thee hath fallen this woe:
He, the Lord of Peace and War,
He alone hath laid us low.
Boast not, haughty conqueror!
Slay, but boast not. Woe! Woe! Woe!

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

From Heaven the curse was shaken
On this predestined head:
From thy hand the plague was taken;
By a mightier vengeance sped.
Mine is the sorrow,
Mine, and for ever;
Who can turn back again
A mighty archer's arrow?
Who can assuage my pain?
Who can make calm my brain?
Who can deliver?

CHORUS.

1.

But within me thoughts are rising,
Severer thoughts, and soul-sufficing:
Swift, like clouds in exhalation,
Come they rushing: whilst a glory
Falls on locks this fiery Passion
Turns from black to hoary!

Voices round me borne in clangour
Sound the trump of things to be:
And heavenly flashes of wise anger
Give my spirit light to see
The great Future; and aright
Judge this judgment of to-night.

2.

I trembled when the strife began—
Praying, my clasped hands trembled
With ill-timed weakness ill-dissembled
But now beyond the strength of man,
My strength has in a moment grown;
And I no more my griefs deplore
Than doth a shape of stone—
A marble Shape, storm-filled, and fair
With might resurgent from despair
I walk triumphant o'er my woe:
For well I feel and well I know,
That God with me this wrong sustains,
And, in me swelling, bursts my chains!

3.

And dost thou make thy boast then of their lying
All cold, upon the mountain and the plain,
My Sons whom thou hast slain?
And that nor tears nor sighing
Can raise their heads again?
My Sons, not vainly have ye died,
For ye your Country glorified!
Each moment as in death ye bowed
On high your martyred Souls ascended;
Yea, soaring in perpetual cloud,

This earth with heaven ye blended—
A living chain in death ye wove;
And rising, raised our world more near those worlds above!

4.

They perish idly? they in vain?
When not a sparrow to the plain
Drops uncared for! Tyrant! they
Are radiant with eternal day!
And oft, unseen, on us they turn
Those looks that make us inly burn,
And swifter through our pulses flow
The bounding blood, their blood below!
How little cause have those for fear
Whose outward forms alone are here!
How nigh are they to Heaven, who there
Have stored their earliest, tenderest care!
Whate'er was ours of erring pride,
This agony hath sanctified:
O'er us the storm hath passed, and we
Are standing here immovably
Upon the platform of the Right;
And we are inwardly as bright
As those last drops which hang like fire
Close-clustered on the piny spire,
When setting suns their glories pour
On yellow vales perturbed no more;
While downward from the eagle's wing
One feather falls in tremulous ring,
And far away the wearied storms retire.

5.

I heard, prophetic in my dreams,
The roaring of a million streams,

While downward from their sources torn,
Came pines and rocks in ruin borne:
Then spake that Storm to me and said,
'Quake thou with awe, but not with dread:
For these are Thrones and Empires rolled
Down Time's broad torrent, as of old:
But thou those flowers remember well,
By foaming floods in peace that dwell;
For thus 'mid wrecks of fear and strife,
Rise up the joys of hourly life;
And all pure bonds and charities
Exhale their sweetness to the skies—
But woe to haughtier spirits! They,
At God's command, are swept away,
Into the gulfs that know not day.'

6.

And now my Song is sung. I go
Far up to fields of endless snow:
Alone till death I walk, unsoiled
By air the tyrants have defiled.
Over a cheek no longer pale
I drop henceforth a funeral veil,
And only dimmed and darkened see
The mountains I have looked on free.
Ye that below abide, unblest,
Paint now no more with flowers your dells;
Nor speak in tone like that which swells,
Loud-echoed from the freeman's breast:
In sable garments walk, and spread
With cerements black your buried dead.
Farewell to all: I go alone;
And dedicate henceforth my days

To muse on God's high Will, and raise
My hands toward th' eternal Throne—
And I beneath the stars will thread
The dark beads of my rosaries;
And ofttimes earthward bow my head,
And listen ofttimes for the tread
Of some far herald, swiftly sent,
To crown with light a shape time-bent,
And dry a childless widow's eyes
With tidings grave of high content,
Wherein unheeded prophecies
Shall find their great accomplishment!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

To the Memory

OF

SARA COLERIDGE

THESE POEMS

ARE DEDICATED.

FEMALE POETRY.

My little Poetess! whose eyes
  Not less than lips demand
The lore of sounding harmonies—
  An almost infant hand
Laying the while my chords among,
Accept song-science in a song.

1.

Fling far thy books! or only read
Of fairy spell and knightly deed:
Hating the pedant's learned strife
Truth walks but in the walks of Life.
Beside thy Mother watch and wait:
Her wish, her thought anticipate.
With kind, poetic insight guess
The want yon Babe can not express.
Be glad to play: and learn, each day,
To love, believe, enjoy, obey!

2.

Fling far thy books! thy leaves be those
Famed Daphne's glittering laurel shows:
For thee inscribed with words sun-bright,
Blank tablets to the casual sight!
Bend o'er yon stream, and o'er its sound
Where sighs of Hylas are kiss-drowned.
No kindly converse scorn or shun:
The Muses danced on Helicon

Enwreathed, and infant Love enwreathing—
A God unwaked—yet softly breathing.

3.

But when within thy deeper eyes
The dawn of ripening Thought shall rise,
And human sympathies have part
With heavenlier yearnings in thy heart,
Walk forth where Larks new-mounted sing,
And catch their transports on thy string!
Partake their joy; fit words supply:
Interpret next yon Thrush hard by:
Explore her deep heart, tone by tone:
But touch not, lest thou taint, thine own!

4.

No Epic swell, no Tragic rage
Be thine: no war with Evil wage;
But show the Good, and show the Fair;
And launch light warblings on the air,
Glassy and pure, as those that stole,
Ere jarred by Love, through Psyche's soul!
More subtle lore than man could reach
With child-like instinct learn and teach:
With airier touch entwined than ours
The dew hang heavy from thy flowers!

5.

Mimic not thou a manly strain;
A woman's song in heart and brain
Should woman be:—a coarser leaven
Would dull that music-birth from heaven.
Yon singing spheres have tones they ne'er
Have deigned as yet with earth to share;

Their Muse reserves that chime unknown
For bosoms vestal as her own;
From her, not alien models, learn
To charm it from its native bourne.

6.

Too rich in vulgarer notes, we crave
The songs we lack, not those we have;
Hope, Beauty, Truth, let thine express;
Nor over-gay, nor mean their dress,
But finely woven and lightly worn;
No gems but those for service borne.
Forth, happy Hymns from a full heart
With natural impulse, simple art,
But softly, when o'er sacred ground,
As though you feared your own sweet sound!

L'ENVOY.

CHIRON taught Thetis' boy to fight:
A little, fearless Bard,
A maid disguised I teach to write;
And this be my reward—
In minstrelsy of hers one day
To clasp that beauteous, wilful Lay,
Which oft its brow o'er mine inclined,
Then, mocking, passed me in the wind!

SONG.

FIRST SHEPHERDESS.

1.

Breath divine of morning odours!
Breath of blossoms, breath of buds;
Onward borne in wingèd chorus,
Through the alleys and old woods:
And thou stream, that, lightly flowing,
Dost thy pretty mirth enforce;
Flash, and laugh, and crystal ripple,
Hurrying in perpetual course:
O the joy to walk, low-singing,
Through those blooming vales, and say
Another morn hath dropped from heaven
With our aged earth to play!

SECOND SHEPHERDESS.

2.

Phosphor, through my casement peeping,
On my folded eyelids shone;
'Wake,' he sang, 'no more of sleeping,
Shadows melt, the night is gone:'
A bird that with the year is ripening,
One brief moment wakes to pour
Through the boughs wild jets of music,
Then sinks in sleep once more.

O the joy to walk, low-singing,
Through those blooming woods, and say
Another spring has stooped from heaven
With our aged earth to play!

SONG.

Sing the old song, amid the sounds dispersing
That burden treasured in your hearts too long;
Sing it with voice low breathed, but never name her.
She will not hear you, in her turrets nursing
High thoughts, too high to mate with mortal song—
Bend o'er her, gentle Heaven, but do not claim her!

In twilight caves, and secret lonelinesses,
She shades the bloom of her unearthly days;
And the soft winds alone have power to woo her:
Far off we catch the dark gleam of her tresses;
And wild birds haunt the wood-walks where she strays,
Intelligible music warbling to her.

That Spirit charged to follow and defend her,
He also, doubtless, suffers this love-pain;
And she perhaps is sad, hearing his sighing:
And yet that face is not so sad as tender;
Like some sweet singer's when her sweetest strain
From the heaved heart is gradually dying!

SONG.

1.

Slanting both hands against her forehead
On me she levelled her bright eyes:
My whole heart brightened as the sea
When midnight clouds part suddenly;
Through all my spirit went the lustre,
Like starlight poured through purple skies.

2.

And then she sang a loud, sweet music,
Yet louder as aloft it clomb;
Soft when her curving lips it left;
Then rising till the heavens were cleft,
As though each strain, on high expanding,
Were echoed in a silver dome.

3.

But, ah! she sings 'she does not love me:'
She loves to say she ne'er can love:
To me her beauty she denies,
Bending the while on me those eyes
Whose beams might charm the mountain leopard,
Or lure Jove's herald from above!

TO A WILD PANSY.

Lone flower of many names, the wind sweeps o'er thee,
Knowing thee not: tumultuous, vain, and wild,

The mountain-torrent sounds and shines before thee;
Yet droop not, little flower, for she who bore thee,
The great Earth, careth for thee,
And from her bosom mild
Delights to feed thee like a newborn child.

Flower on the Past's dark brow! I gaze upon thee
Till my dim eyes are vacant as thine own:
With labour I have sought, yet now I shun thee:
Flower of sad Thought! thou art not mine alone;—
Thou from my eyes art gone;
And long-forgotten voices swell the strain
Of that loud mountain-stream whose clamour stuns
my brain!

SONG.

1.

Softly, O midnight Hours!
Move softly o'er the bowers
Where lies in happy sleep a girl so fair!
For ye have power, men say,
Our hearts in sleep to sway,
And cage cold fancies in a moonlight snare.
Round ivory neck and arm
Enclasp a separate charm:
Hang o'er her poised; but breathe nor sigh nor prayer:
Silently ye may smile,
But hold your breath the while,
And let the wind sweep back your cloudy hair!

2.

Bend down your glittering urns
Ere yet the dawn returns,
And star with dew the lawn her feet shall tread ;
Upon the air rain balm ;
Bid all the woods be calm ;
Ambrosial dreams with healthful slumbers wed.
That so the Maiden may
With smiles your care repay
When from her couch she lifts her golden head ;
Waking with earliest birds,
Ere yet the misty herds
Leave warm 'mid the grey grass their dusky bed.

LOVE AND SORROW.

WHEREVER under bowers of myrtle
Love, summer-tressed, and vernal-eyed,
At morn or eve is seen to wander,
A dark-eyed Girl is at his side.

No eye beholds the Virgin gliding
Unsandalled through the thicket's glooms ;
Yet some have marked her shadow moving
Like twilight o'er the whiter blooms.

A golden bow the Brother carries,
A silver flute the Sister bears :
And ever at the fatal moment
The notes and arrows fly in pairs.

She rests that flute upon her bosom
  While up to Heaven his bow he rears,
And as her kisses make it tremble
  That flute is moistened by her tears.

The lovely twain were born together,
  And in the same shell-cradle laid,
By one sea-murmur lulled to slumber,
  Together slept, and sleeping played,

With hands into each other's woven,
  And whispering mouths that seem to teach
Each other in their rosy motion
  What still their favourites learn from each.

Proud of her boy, the Mother showed him
  To mortal and immortal eye;
But hid, because she loved her dearer,
  The deeper, sweeter Mystery.

Accept them both, or hope for neither,
  Love-seeking Youth, or Maid love-lorn,
For Grief has come when Love is welcome,
  And Love will comfort those who mourn.

ODE ON LEAVING ITALY.

(Written many years ago.)

1.

Angels that with love 'revere
  The gentle changes of the day,'
Thus solaced bend they o'er the bier
  Ausonia, of thy long decay?

Thy large flower fading softly, slowly,
Fan they, and fill with sighs as lowly
As tender, and as deep as those
The year on Summer's grave bestows;
When hectic mounds of vaporous wood
Extend for Autumn's cheek their cushion,
And Heaven's own tears on boughs o'er-dewed
Anoint them—'for their dissolution?'

2.

Ah, would it were so! Death-bells tolled
O'er graves like these no pangs awaken:
Unguilty griefs are soon consoled,
But thou in death art shaken
By dreams in direful alternation
Of action blind, and aimless passion,
With hopes of future empire, based
On noblest instincts run to waste.
And worst of all, one sable pall
Hangs o'er that dying couch suspended:
Thyself, thou knowest, hast wrought thy fall—
Thy tears with tears of blood are blended.

3.

Death, that from none accepts denial,
In reverence thrice his sceptre bowed;
A triple life, a threefold trial,
The Fates to thee allowed.
Etrurian greatness gold had tamed
Ere Mars his iron empire claimed:
Then Rome arose; and like that God
All lands, subdued and bleeding, trod.
She sank:—Thy States, redeemed once more,
Upreared to Heaven a smiling brow:

Like flowers from chains of winter frore
They rose: where lie they now?

4.

Venice yet crowns the orb of waters,
Why sinks she not beneath them? What
Are now her sons? her beauteous daughters—
Go, Stranger; name them not!
Genoa, whose star-eyed Pilgrim gave
Our world its mate beyond the wave,
Scarcely retains on Europe's shore
A name: her place is hers no more.
Her choicest boon where Nature showers
On thy blue bay, Parthenopè,
There most corruption blights the bowers
Of men too abject to be free.

5.

Pisa to earth inclines her brow;
Her 'field of Death' becomes her most:
Sea-born Amalphi needs not now
That compass, once her boast.
The sunshine beats Ravenna's streets:
That glare alone the traveller greets:
Ferrara wakes her echoes lone
In Tasso's wrong to sing her own:
Bologna's arts, and Padua's schools,
And sacerdotal Milan grey,
Old Saturn rules, while Janus fools;
And Momus ratifies their sway!

6.

A wind-tossed wreath of odorous roses
Against me borne in wanton play

On lips and lyre their seal imposes:—
I know what ye would say!
Those haunts, I know, are sacred places,
Loved of the Loves and all the Graces;
And, wandering through those lucent bowers,
To love them, not to judge, is ours.
I love them—love in grief: and more
While on those glorious souls I muse
Wherewith surcharged they were of yore
As ye, rich flowers, with morning dews!

7.

Day after day at Rome I sate,
Dejected sate, with brow low-bent,
The vault of an abandoned gate
O'er head my firmament.
They muttered Freedom's queenly name:
It stung my sadness into shame.
The wise, the constant, Freedom calls;
The rest she scourges from her halls!
There Justice lifts her axe and rods;
There all the Virtues take their stand,
Sun-facing statues of the Gods
That guard a Heaven-loved land!

8.

I asked for Brutus. What! too high
The passion? Give me Cæsar then!
Airs, airs in which her latest sigh
Cornelia left, ye nourished Men,
Ye nourished Men in those great days
Whereon I fix with grief my gaze—
O wildly-blooming, slenderest trees,
That bend like feathers in the breeze,

Have I then hurt you with my song?
In deprecating grace your tresses
Wide flinging, ye lament your wrong
From verse whose very praise oppresses

9.

The masters of a milder sway
I asked for. Dantè, where art thou?
Petrarca, shadowing with deep bay
The breadth of an illumined brow?
I asked—my tears fell fast and faster—
I asked for Raffaelle and his Master.
Those gleams, those pictured shapes of theirs!
Deep-breathers of Elysian airs—
O'er Earth they breathe them, pacing slowly
With steps that lead the Elysian measures!
O how their awful melancholy
Rebukes all baser pains and pleasures!

10.

Cease, cease, wild bird, that melody
Where grief is over scorn prevailing;
In grief thou singest—in grief sing I—
Must thou alone be wailing?
No, not in grief she sings, but love!
The Heavens themselves my grief reprove;
The Love-star through that roseate gloom
Leaps up—ah yes! o'er Virgil's tomb!
O'er Virgil's tomb! But where, O where
His strains?—Ye winds whose breath dispersed them
Abroad o'er every region, bear
Them back into the vales that nursed them!

11.

No vain regret or vain desire
  Could touch that breast whose thoughts immortal
Walked ever with the Olympian choir :
  Across the guarded portal
Of godlike souls, no pangs of earth
Or entrance find, or issue forth.
Pity and love, not grief were thine,
Couldst thou, great Bard, thine eyes decline
On these fair shores ! O teach me thus
  To bend ; nor sigh that beauty viewing
Of which yon Heaven is amorous
  Descending fast to death and ruin !

12.

The sun is set. Long shadows grey
  Trail slowly o'er the mountain head :
The olive-forests far away
  Grow pale, like ashes spread
By some dejected Penitent,
On locks whose prime was idly spent—
Ah, brand no more with harsher name
A land which thus herself doth blame !
Still in the west a feeble glimmer
  Is struggling with those shadows dun :
The face I love grows dim and dimmer—
  'Tis going—It is gone.

SONG.

1.

A BRIGHTENED Sorrow veils her face,
Sweet thoughts with thoughts forlorn,
And playful sadness, like the grace
Of an Autumnal morn,
When birds new-waked, like sprightly elves,
The languid echoes rouse,
And infant Zephyrs make themselves
Familiar with old boughs.

2.

All round our hearts the Maiden's hair
Its own soft shade doth fling:
Her sigh perfumes the forest air,
Like eve—but eve in Spring;
When Spring precipitates her flow;
And Summer, swift to greet her,
Breathes, every night, a warmer glow
Half through the dusk to meet her.

ODE ON THE ASCENT OF THE ALPS.

1.

ALL night as in my dreams I lay
The shout of torrents without number
Was in mine ears—'Away, away,
No time have we for slumber!
The star-beams in our eddies play—
The moon is set: away, away!'

And round the hills in tumult borne
Through echoing caves and gorges rocking,
The voices of the night and morn
Are crying louder in their scorn,
My tedious languor mocking.
Alas! in vain man's mortal limbs would rise
To join in elemental ecstasies!

2.

'But thou, O Muse, our heavenly mate,
Unclogged art thou by fleshly weight!
Ascend, upbearing my desire
Among the mountains high and higher!
Leap from the glen upon the forest;
Leap from the forest on the snow:
And while from snow to cloud thou soarest
Send back thy song below!'

3.

I spake—Behold her o'er the broad lake flying:
Like a great Angel missioned to bestow
Some boon on men beneath in sadness lying:
The waves are murmuring silver murmurs low:
Beneath the curdling wind
Green through the shades the waters rush and roll,
Or whitened only by the unfrequent shoal;—
Lo! two dark hills, with darker yet behind,
Confront them, purple mountains almost black,
Each behind each self-folded and withdrawn
Beneath the umbrage of yon cloudy rack—
That orange gleam! 'tis dawn!
Onward! the swan's flight with yon eagle's blending,
On, wingèd Muse; still forward and ascending!

4.

That mighty sweep, one orbit of her flight,
Has over-curved the mountain's barrier height:
She sinks, she speeds, on prosperous wing prevailing
(Broad lights below and changeful shadows sailing)
Over a vale upon whose breadth may shine
  Not noontide suns alone, but suns of even,
Warming the rich fields in their red decline,
  The pale streams flushing with the hues of heaven.
In vain those Shepherds call; they cannot wake
  The echoes on this wide and cultured plain,
Where spreads the river now into a lake,
  Now curves through walnut meads its golden chain,
    In-isling here and there some spot
    With orchard, hive, and one fair cot;
    Or children dragging from their boat
    Into the flood some reverend goat—
O happy valley! cradle soft and deep
    For blissful life, calm sleep,
And leisure, and affections free and wide,
Give me yon plough, that I with thee may bide,
    Or climb those stages, cot-bestrown
    Vast steps of Summer's mountain-throne,
Terrace o'er terrace rising, line o'er line,
Swathed in the light wreaths of the elaborate vine.
    On yonder loftiest steep, the last
      From whose green base the grey rocks rise,
    In random circle idly cast
      A happy household lies.
    Not far there sits the plighted maid;
    Her locks a lover's fingers braid—
    Fair, fearless maiden! cause for fear
    Is none, though he alone were near:

Indulge at will thy sweet security!
He doth but that bold front incline
And all those wind-tossed curls on thine
To catch from thy wild lips their mountain purity!

5.

Up to lonelier, narrower valleys
Winds an intricate ravine
Whence the latest snow-blast sallies
Through black firs scarce seen.
I hear through clouds the Hunter's hollo—
I hear, but scarcely dare to follow
'Mid chaotic rocks and woods,
Such as in her lyric moods
Nature, like a Bacchante, flings
From half-shaped imaginings.
There lie two prostrate trunks entangled
Like intertwisted dragons strangled:
Yon glacier seems a prophet's robes;
While broken sceptres, thrones, and globes
Are strewn, as left by rival States
Of elemental Potentates.
Pale floats the mist, a wizard's shroud:
There looms the broad crag from the cloud:—
A thunder-graven Sphinx's head, half blind,
Gazing on far lands through the freezing wind!

6.

My song grows smoother, hearing
A smooth-voiced female hymn,
In verse alternate cheering
The pass above me dim.
Behold them now; a band
Of maids descending hand in hand,

Singing softly, singing proudly
Low-toned anthems echoed loudly—
Martyr sufferings, mountain pleasures,
Grave, religious, sweet affections,
Tuned with notes of ancient measures,
Linked with patriot recollections!
The land is strong when such as these
Inspire their lovers and their brothers:
The land is strong with such as these
Her heroes' destined mothers!
Freedom from every hut
Sends down a separate root:
And when base swords her branches cut
With tenfold might they shoot.
Her Temples are of pine-woods made,
Not Tyrian gold or Parian stone
With roofs of cedar gem-inlaid:
There sits she; thence alone
To those dispensing her large love
Who share her solemn feast above,
Nor fear her icy halls, or zone
Of clouds with which she girds her own!

7.

Mount higher, mount higher!
With rock-girdled gyre
Behind each grey ridge
And pine-feathered ledge
A vale is suspended; mount higher, mount higher!

From rock to rock leaping
The wild goats, they bound;
The resinous odours
Are wafted around;

The clouds, disentangled,
With blue gaps are spangled;
Green isles of the valley with sunshine are crowned.

The birches new budded
Make pink the green copse;
From the briar and hazel
The golden rain drops;
As he climbs, the boughs shaking,
Nest-seeking, branch-breaking,
Beneath the white ash-boughs the shepherd-boy stops.

How happy that shepherd!
How happy the lass!
How freshly beside them
The pure Zephyrs pass!
Sing, sing! From the soil
Springs bubble and boil,
And sun-smitten torrents fall soft on the grass.

Once more on every turf-clad stage
Peeps forth some household hermitage;
Once more from tracts serene and high
The young lambs bleat, the dams reply.
From echoing trunks I hear the dash
Of headlong stream or 'Rans des Vaches.'
Lo! from thickets lightly springing,
An old church spire! around its base
Devotions ever upward winging,
That find in Heaven their resting-place!
Around it grey-haired votaries kneel,
Who look along it to the skies,
And babes with imitative zeal
Kissing their lip-worn rosaries.
Not soon the mountain Faith grows cold:
Yon hamlet is six centuries old!

8.

Mount higher, mount higher,
To the cloudland nigher;
To the regions we climb
Of our long-buried prime—
In the skies it awaits us—Up higher, up higher!

Loud Hymn and clear Pæan
From caverns are rolled:
Far below us is Summer—
We have slipped from her fold;
We have passed, like a breath,
To new life without death—
The Spring and our Childhood all round we behold.

9.

What are toils to men who scorn them?
Peril what to men who dare?
Chains to hands that once have torn them
Thenceforth are chains of air!
The winds above the snow-plains fleet—
Like them I race with wingèd feet:
My bonds are dropped; my spirit thrills,
A Freeman of the Eternal Hills!
Each cloud by turns I make my tent;
I run before the radiance sent
From every mountain's silver mail
Across dark gulfs from vale to vale:
The curdling mist in smooth career,
A lovely phantom fleeting by,
As silent sails through yon pale mere
That shrines its own blue sky;
The sun that mere makes now its targe,
And rainbow vapours tread its marge:

A whisper, such as lovers use,
Far off on those still heights were heard;
But here was never sound of bird;
No wild bee lets its murmur loose
O'er those blue flowers in rocky cleft
Their unvoluptuous eyes that lift
From feathery tufts of spangled moss
Pure as the snows which they emboss.
Lo! like the foam of wintry ocean,
The clouds beneath my feet are curled;
Dividing now with solemn motion
They give me back the world.
No veil I fear, no visual bond
In this aerial diamond:
My head o'er crystal bastions bent,
'Twixt star-crowned spire and battlement
I see the river of green ice
From precipice to precipice
Wind earthward slow, with blighting breath
Blackening the vales below like death.
Far, far beneath in sealike reach
Receding to the horizon's rim,
I see the woods of pine and beech,
By their own breath made dim:
I see the land which heroes trod;
I see the land where Virtue chose
To live alone, and live to God;
The land she gave to those
Who know that on the hearth alone
True Freedom rears her fort and throne.

10.

Lift up, not only hand and eye,
Lift up, O Man, thy heart on high:

Or downward gaze once more; and see
How spiritual dust can be!
Then far into the Future dive,
And ask if there indeed survive,
When fade the worlds, no primal shapes
Of disembodied hills and capes,
Types meet to shadow Godhead forth;
Dread antitypes of shapes on earth?
O Earth! thou shalt not wholly die,
Of some 'new Earth' the chrysalis
Predestined from Eternity,
Nor seldom seen through this;
On which, in glory gazing, we
Perchance shall oft remember thee,
And trace through it thine ancient frame
Distinct, like flame espied through flame,
Or like our earliest friends, above
Not lost, though merged in heavenlier love—
How changed, yet still the same!

II.

Here rest, my Soul, from meteor dreams;
And thou, my Song, find rest. The streams
That left at morn yon mountain's brow
Are sleeping with Locarno now.
Earth seeks perforce from joy release;
But Heaven in rapture finds her peace.
Gaze on those skies at once o'er all the earth
Dissolving in a bath of purple dews,
And spread thy soul abroad as widely forth
Till Love thy soul, as Heaven the snows, suffuse.
The sun is set—but upwards without end
Two mighty beams, diverging,

Like hands in benediction raised, extend;
From the great deep a crimson mist is surging:
The peaks are pyres where Day doth lie
Like Indian widows proud to die;
Strange gleams, each moment ten times bright,
Shoot round, transfiguring as they smite
All spaces of the empyreal height—
Deep gleams, high Words which God to man doth speak,
From peak to solemn peak in order driven
They speed—A loftier vision dost thou seek?
Rise then—to Heaven!

SONG.

(TO A BIRD.)

O WING-GIRT form of air and fire!
Thy little heart will burst atwain:
Sooner Apollo's steeds will tire
Than thou remit that ardent strain!

Who changed to shape so fine and small
Some Mænad o'er the rough hills flying?
What God, expelled the Olympian Hall,
In anger took this mould to die in?

Fly, Winter, fly! the notes she flingeth
Are shafts that pierce thy mailed array:
Come, Summer, come! the songs she singeth
With buds and blossoms pave thy way!

SONG.

Give me back my heart, fair child;
To you as yet 'twere worth but little!
Half beguiler, half beguiled,
Be you warned: your own is brittle.

'Hid it! dropt it on the moors!
Lost it, and you cannot find it'—
My own heart I want, not yours:
You have bound, and must unbind it.

Fling it from you: Youth is strong:
Love is trouble; love is folly:
Love, that makes an old heart young,
Makes a young heart melancholy.

THE DIGNITY OF SORROW.

1.

I have not seen you since the Shadow fell
From Heaven against your door:
I know not if you bear your Sorrow well:
I only know your hearth is cold: your floor
Will hear that soft and gliding tread no more.

2.

I know our ancient friendship now is over:
I can love still, and so will not complain:
I have not loved in vain;

Taught long that Art of Sadness to discover
Which draws stern solace from the wells of pain.
You love the dead alone; or you have lost
The power and life of Love in Time's untimely frost.

3.

You have stood up in the great Monarch's court—
The court of Death: in spirit you have seen
His lonely shades serene
Where all the mighty men of old resort.
The eyes of Proserpine,
Heavy and black, have rested upon thine.
Her vintage, wine from laurel-berries prest,
You raised—and laid you then the chalice down,
Scared by that Queen's inevitable frown,
Just as the marble touched your panting breast?
O! in the mirror of that poison cold
What Shadow or what Shape did you behold?

4.

And she is dead: and you have long been dying:
And are recovered, and live on; O Friend!
Say, what shall be the end
Of leaf-lamenting boughs and wintry sighing?
When will the woods that moan
Resume their green array?
When will the dull, sad clouds be overblown,
And a calm sunset close our stormy day?

5.

My thoughts pursue you still. I call them back.
Once more they seek you, like the birds that rise
Up from their reeds, and in a winding track
Circle the field wherein their forage lies;

Or like some poor and downcast Pensioner,
Depressed and timid, though his head be grey,
That moves with curving steps to greet his Lord,
Whom he hath watched all day—
Yet lets him pass away without a word;
And gazes on his footsteps from afar.

ODE TO AN EOLIAN HARP.

TIME goes: yet not for ever
Are gone those joys once mine:
Once more my pulses quiver
With every pulse of thine,
With every throbbing murmur,
And dying gasp divine.

As the graceful bending
Of a breeze-swayed tree,
Rising or descending
T'ward the shade-swept lea,
Thus are my fancies rocked and swayed
By thy slow harmony!

Hast thou felt the sorrow
Which thy sighs bemoan?
Or art fain to borrow,
Like the bards, a tone
Of visionary sadness
And anguish not thine own?

By soft Zephyrs greeted
Thou dost answer well:
Fretfully entreated
Thou wilt nothing tell—
Let me win thy secret
By some flattering spell.

Unforgetful mourner
Undisquieted!
Innocent adorner
Of every season fled!
Consoler of the absent
Condoler of the dead!

As one, now blind, that lingers,
On the cold world cast,
Following with frosty fingers
Old names on tree-stems traced,
I stand: thy breath like spring unsealing
All the ice-bound Past.

Making that Past so distant,
Thou giv'st us age in youth:—
Wilt thou, with boon persistent
When youth is gone, in sooth
With lights of morning paint once more
The mists of time and ruth?

On, with angel fleetness,
Again those sounds sweep on,
Crushing the air to sweetness:
They came, and they are gone!
Again my dreams desert me:
I sit once more alone.

When from some doomed city
  Her Gods depart, such sound!
Of mixed reproof and pity
  In refluent airs half drowned
Are heard at night among the clouds
  By kneelers on the ground.

Half the world are wailing,
  Harp of Heaven, like thee!
Tell them vain is railing
  At what needs must be;
That sighs are vainer still unless
  Those sighs make melody.

Tell them dead leaves are fragrant;
  Autumn airs serene;
Showers gone by or vagrant
  Smile with rainbow sheen:
Delights, if pure, when buried,
  Keep their graves long green.

From Fortune thus we'll hide us;
  On Fate our scorn thus wreak:
That help the strong denied us
  We'll borrow from the weak—
Hark, hark; again that murmur!
  O heart, be strong or break!

SONG.

Cool, if ye may, my hands, rivers soft-sliding!
Far-sunken, piny dells, and shadowy glades,
Take, take me to your shades!
Sea-caverns deep in emerald cloisters hiding
Dark gems and endless peace,
O bid my tumults cease:
Fan me, cold airs, with gelid breath serene:
Ye meadows lull me with your soothing green!

Heaven is too wide a sphere for Man's weak spirit
To fill, and there, with joy or grief oppress,
To find, all round, one rest:
And Earth, that bourne we sought not but inherit,
In her small bound can yield
No region and no field
For a proud Soul that seeks and seeks for ever
That which she knows too well no finite space can give her!

TO M. O. B.

As if no child on all the earth,
Till thou wert born, had golden hair,
And eyes, pure lamps of loveliest mirth,
Thy Mother lifts her hands to swear
No charms were e'er like thine: but I
Misdoubt the boast—almost deny.

Who knows but in some Grecian vale
  Even now as fair a child may sit
Close-nested like a nightingale,
  While round and round the dark birds flit
Amazed at sunny locks and eyes,
Strange rebels 'gainst Egean skies!

Who knows but where the almond waves,
  'Mid some Circassian forest's gloom,
Between two scarce divided graves,
  An English and a native tomb,
Some child like thee the buds may gather,
And sing 'A hero was my Father!'

Ausonia, in her bowered retreats—
  But has not England too her bowers
Where Love with love-touched Beauty meets,
  And rears from earth supernal flowers?
Away, away! 'twere shame to say
No child was e'er like thee: away!

Or if indeed no prosperous star
  To form so fine on earth has given
A bloom so sweet—what then? there are
  A thousand such in Heaven!
Away, away! 'twere sin to say
No child was e'er like thee. Away!

1840.

COLERIDGE.

His eye saw all things in the symmetry
Of true and just proportion; and his ear
That inner tone could hear
Which flows beneath the outer: therefore he
Was as a mighty shell, fashioning all
The winds to one rich sound, ample and musical.

Yet dim that eye with gazing upon heaven;
Wearied with vigils, and the frequent birth
Of tears when turned to earth:
Therefore, though farthest ken to him was given,
Near things escaped him: through them—as a gem
Diaphanous—he saw; and therefore saw not them.

Moreover, men whom sovereign wisdom teaches
That God not less in humblest forms abides
Than those the great veil hides,
Such men a tremor of bright reverence reaches;
And thus, confronted ever with high things,
Like cherubim they hide their eyes between their wings.

No loftier, purer soul than his hath ever
With awe revolved the planetary page,
From infancy to age,
Of Knowledge; sedulous and proud to give her
The whole of his great heart for her own sake;
For what she is; not what she does, or what can make.

And mighty Voices from afar came to him:
Converse of trumpets held by cloudy forms,
And speech of choral storms:
Spirits of night and noontide bent to woo him:
He stood the while, lonely and desolate
As Adam, when he ruled the world, yet found no mate.

His loftiest thoughts were but like palms uplifted,
Aspiring, yet in supplicating guise;
His sweetest songs were sighs:
Adown Lethean streams his spirit drifted,
Under Elysian shades from poppied bank
With Amaranths massed in dark luxuriance dank.

Coleridge, farewell! That great and grave transition
Which may not Priest, or King, or Conqueror spare,
And yet a Babe can bear,
Has come to thee. Through life a goodly vision
Was thine; and time it was thy rest to take.
Soft be the sound ordained thy sleep to break—
When thou art waking, wake me, for thy Master's sake!

1839.

A CHARACTER.

She scarce can tell if she have loved or not;
She of her heart no register has kept:
She knows but this, that once too blest her lot
Appeared for earth; and that ere long she wept.

Upon life's daily task without pretence
She moves; and many love her; all revere:
She will be full of joy when summoned hence,
Yet not unhappy seems while lingering here.

If once her breast the storms of anguish tore
On that pure lake no weeds or scum they cast:
Time has ta'en from her much, but given her more;
And of his gifts the best will be the last.

Her parents lie beneath the churchyard grass;
On her own strength and foresight she is thrown,
Who, while her brothers played, too timid was
To join their sports; and played or sighed alone.

Her heart is as a spot of hallowed ground
Filled with old tombs and sacred to the Past,
Such as near villages remote is found,
Or rain-washed chancel in some woodland waste:

It once was pierced each day by some new stone,
And thronged with weeping women and sad men:
But now it lies with grass and flowers o'ergrown,
And o'er it pipes the thrush and builds the wren.

MOODS.

In heaviness I lay; no word
I spake; I breathed no tone;
When down from Heaven a thought of joy
Into my heart fell prone:
It smote, it thrilled, it pierced my mind;
Then by that mind's up-buoyaunce
Half-lifted, o'er it cast a glow
Of beauty and deep joyaunce.

It left me: and my soul once more
Grew dreary as a flood,
When that bright Nymph who bathed therein
Hath vanished in the wood:
When her last lustre from the wave
Is gone, or all but gone,
And backward close the forest boughs,
And the shades of Eve come on.

TO A. S. O. B.

I NEVER looked upon the face
Of her whom you deplore and love;
Yet bending o'er this portrait's grace
Some image lost I seem to trace,
Not lost, but stored above.

I never saw those eyes whose beams
Made heaving hearts as calm and bright
As Hesper makes the ocean-streams:
O! if they shine upon your dreams
To you how dear must be the night!

I never saw those lips whose breath
Was earth's best music once for you:
From the cold cells of dreary death
What message do they now bequeath?
A long and last 'adieu.'

Your own are trembling: Prize, O prize
That farewell word, that holiest sound,
The pledge of undissevered ties;
Of mortal love in Paradise
With love immortal crowned.

And though your cheek with tears be wet
  Forbear to murmur 'Is this all?'
Love meets and mingles with Regret,
Like alienated brethren met
  At the paternal funeral.

I bring your anguish no relief:
  I scorn, like you, the opiate spell:
But barren woes, like joys, are brief;
If faithful you would make your grief,
  Grieve calmly, and grieve well!

So shall wise suffering make you wise;
  So, purged from passion's hectic glow,
Life's lasting shapes shall meet your eyes
Like nature's naked majesties
  After a night of snow.

So shall repentance easier be,
  And waking Conscience wake in light,
Past times roll back, from night set free,
And Life regain her unity,
  And Death lose half his might.

I charge you by the smile that hung
  Upon her eyes in their eclipse;
That to her deep, dark lashes clung,
And looked so sweet, and stayed so long,
  And waned so slowly on her lips;

To seek within the cloistered pale
  Of Sorrow, a sequestered cell;
Nor ever stray beyond that vale
Which catches on the passing gale
  Her low, sweet convent bell.

And when you feel your spirit burn,
  Or swell, within your aching breast,
Strain to your heart her votive urn:—
Speak nothing then—but gently turn
  Your eyes unto the West,

Until they meet that mystic line
  Where Earth is lost in Heaven's blue gleam,
When earliest stars begin to shine,
And lessening lights of day decline
  Along the lilied stream.

ANGELINA.

For ever gentle, sweet, and lone,
  Her voice, her step, her hand subdued,
She moves like one who ne'er has known
  The changes of a human mood.

The tender dawn of those fair eyes
  Breaks, vaguely sweet, through tears unfalling;
Waking strange Fancies; Memories
  As sweet, as strange recalling.

A soft shade makes her face more fair:—
  Not softer, slanted from above
On lilies rocked in evening air
  That shadow from the Star of Love!

Say, has she loved? in some far sphere
  Perhaps she loved, and loved in vain;
And still in this cold exile here
  Forgets the cause, but feels the pain.

1.

My hope, in happier days than these
My love—hope past;
Memory's one star on lonely seas;
My anchor, last!
Why ask'st thou, with subdued surprise,
And that mild glee,
Wherefore I turn, still turn mine eyes
From all, to thee?

2.

The blind man turns—and none forbids—
Into sunshine
His filmy, cold, unlighted lids;
The deaf incline
To harps whence songs, for them unborn,
Float light and free;
To graves long-cherished hearts forlorn;
And I to thee.

DEATH IN CHILDBIRTH.

Sweet Martyr of thine Infant and thy Love,
O what a death is thine!
Is this to die? Then, Love, henceforth approve
This, this of all thy gifts the most divine!
Grave she needs not: Matrons, cover
Her white bed with flowers all over;
With the dark, cool violets swathing
A full bosom mother-hearted;
Under lily shadows bathing
Brows whose anguish hath departed.

Life with others, Death with thee
Plays a grave game smilingly—
O Death not Death! through worlds of bliss
The happy new-born Soul is straying!
O Death not Death! thy Babe in this,
An Angel on the earth, is playing!

Three prayers to Heaven the Lover doth present:
—That she he loves rest ever innocent:
Next for her happiness: and last that he
Shield of that goodness and that peace may be.
Dear friend, repine no longer—be content;
For thou hast gained two wishes out of three!

Smiles are the wrinkles of our Youth:—
Ah, gently turn the page;
And say that wrinkles are in sooth
But smiles of our old age!

EPITAPH.

Ye village poor, whose pitying fingers strew
Those kind, cold sprays of rosemary and rue;
And brush light snows from every tombstone dun,
While Evening's orange gleams in sequence run

From Pine to Pine—drop here a spray or or two;
Though He below was never known to you:
And bid the Stranger spare the grave of one
Who said of him no evil, and thought none.

A SKETCH.

MADE up of Instincts half, half Appetites,
Ingenuous, winning, graceful, graceless, gay,
Her wingèd fancies, wheresoe'er they stray,
Find, yield, or make a thousand strange delights;
Then, ranging swift as sounds or lunar sprites,
For ever they desert, but ne'er betray:
To please was what they promised; not to stay:
No pledge they asked for; they conferred no rights—
Welcome them, Stranger, when they come; and say,
'Away, sweet Wantons!' when they fly away.

A SIGH in the morning grey!
And a solitary tear,
Slow to gather, slow to fall;
And a painful flush of shame
At the naming of thy name—
This is little, this is all,
False one, which remains to say
That thy love of old was here;
That thy love hath passed away!

DOUBTS.

Fear not—or thou shalt find
Cause too much for fear:
Sigh not—or every wind
Shall waft thee, deep and drear,
The echoes of the murmurs
Of many a buried year.

O'er the ice-plain gliding,
Forward, fearless, race:
Doubly hard were sliding
With reverted face:
Doubts are dull rehearsals
Of self-doomed disgrace!

LOVE'S SPITE.

You take a town you cannot keep;
And, forced in turn to fly,
O'er ruins you have made shall leap
Your deadliest enemy!
Her love is yours—and be it so—
But can you keep it? No, no, no!

Upon her brow we gazed with awe;
And loved, and wished to love, in vain;
But when the snow begins to thaw
We shun with scorn the miry plain.
Women with grace may yield: but she
Appeared some Virgin Deity.

Bright was her soul as Dian's crest
Whitening on Vesta's fane its sheen:
Cold looked she as the waveless breast
Of some stone Dian at thirteen.
Men loved: but hope they deemed to be
A sweet Impossibility!

DOLORES.

(SCENE IN A MADHOUSE).

1.

SHE sings her wild dirges, and smiles 'mid the strain;
Then turns to remember her sorrow.
Men gaze on that smile till their tears fall like rain,
And she from their weeping doth borrow.
She forgets her own story: and none, she complains,
Of the cause for her grief will remind her:
She fancies but one of her kindred remains:
She is certain he never can find her.
Whence caught you, sweet Mourner, the swell of that song?
'From the arch of yon wind-laden billow.'
Whence learned you, sweet Lady, your sadness?—
'From Wrong.'
Your meekness who taught you?—'The Willow.'

2.

She boasts that her tresses have never grown grey;
Yet murmurs, 'How long I am dying!
My sorrows but make me more lovely, men say;
But I soon in my grave shall be lying!

My grave will embrace me all round and all round,
More warmly than thou, my false lover;
No Rival will steal to my couch without sound:
No Sister will come to discover!'
Whence caught you, sweet Mourner, the swell of that song?
'From the arch of the wind-laden billow.'
Whence learned you, sweet Lady, your sadness?—
'From Wrong.'
Your meekness who taught you?—'The Willow.'

3.

She courts the cold wind when the tempests blow hard,
And at first she exults in their raving:
She clasps with her fingers the lattice close-barred:
Like the billows her bosom is waving:
But ere long with strange pity her spirit is crossed,
And she sighs for poor mariners drowning:
And—'thus in my passion of old I was tossed'—
And—'thus stood my grey Father frowning!'
Whence caught you, sweet Mourner, the swell of that song?
'From the arch of the wind-laden billow.'
Whence learned you, sweet Lady, your sadness?—
'From Wrong.'
Your meekness who taught you?—'The Willow.'

4.

On the wall the rough water chafes ever its breast;
'Mid the willows my bark was awaiting;
Passing by, on her cold hand a sad kiss I prest,
And slowly moved on to the grating.

'For my lips, not my fingers, your bounty I crave!'
She cried with a laugh and light shiver:
'You drift o'er the ocean, and I to the grave;
Henceforward we meet not for ever!'
Where found you, sweet Mourner, the swell of that song?
'In the arch of yon wind-laden billow.'
Whence learned you, sweet Lady, your sadness?—
'From Wrong.'
Your meekness who taught you?—'The Willow.'

SONNETS.

I.

THE POETIC FUNCTION.—1.

The College of the Priests is with us still:
Still on our low, and sin-defilèd ground
The borders of their sacred vestments sound:
But where by caverned wood, or crested hill,
Or cedar-girded mountain citadel,
Where are the high-commissioned Prophets found?
The Unanointed Order, not uncrowned,
For whom the curtain unremovable
Of Time, transparent grows;—to whom is given,
When mighty Nations rage in anarchy,
Bending with arm outstretched and potent rod
To part the waves of that rebellious sea;
To warn ill Rulers of the ways of Heaven,
And sternly monish Kings that know not God?

II.

THE POETIC FUNCTION.—2.

I ASKED; and it was answered me—'The Praise
And Burthen, which to these did once belong,
Is now committed to the Lords of Song;—
For, throned above earth-mist, and Time's poor haze,
Their spiritual spheres they build and raise:
And those eternal Truths on which are hung
The fates of mortals, lurk their leaves among;
And what exalts a nation; what betrays.
Therefore the People cleave to them: and all
To whom the World, not Truth and Man, are dear
Abhor them, and suspect; despise, yet fear;
And will not bid them to their festival,
Unless, like Balak's wise and wicked Seer,
They merge the Prophet in the Sorcerer.'

III.

A WAYWARD child, scarce knowing what he wanted,
Ran to one side while all his comrades played,
And in the sunny ground a berry planted:
An olive-tree uprose; and in its shade,
While summer after summer glowed and panted,
That child's descendants sat. The tree decayed:
Then of one polished branch this flute was made,
The sire of all sweet sounds and strains enchanted,
Immortal nurslings of the transient breeze.
That child is dead and gone; that olive now
Is swept away with all its centuries;
Yet this selected fragment of a bough
Survives, and may survive till earth expires
And mortal strains are lost in songs of heavenly choirs.

IV.

The spring of my sweet life thou madest thine;
And on my summer glories thou hast fed:
And now the vernal melodies are dead
On lips that mourn for joys no longer mine.
The summer brilliance now hath ceased to shine
Upon a brow so oft disquieted
By agonising doubts: thy love is fled;
And thou art flying—how dare I repine?
How could I hope so great a love would cleave
To one whose fault too well was known to thee?
Lament not, O my love; or, if thou grieve,
For me lament not, though my grief thou share;
For I have known in dreams my destiny,
And what I ought to welcome I can bear.

V.

I was ashamed when some one said to me,
'How blue those mountains are, that cloud how fair'—
I could have praised them first: but could not dare
To mix false words with joy so pure and free.
And when they said, 'Behold that shining sea!'
I wept beneath my long and veiling hair;
Stung by the rapture which I could not share,
Long, long I wept, and unrestrainedly.
Stranger! if thou canst help me, help me now.
Beauty I saw of old where'er I gazed:
But now, like one by light too brilliant dazed,
To me the loveliest things look blank and grey.
A cloud is on my breast, and on my brow—
Abashed I turn from fairest shapes away.

VI.

THE light that played above thine infancy,
I see it still in all that shining hair:
And on that countenance pale and brow of care,
Depressed by melancholy though they be,
Departing Youth looks back remorsefully—
Then why such sorrow in a world so fair,
As if there were no Heaven to minister
Immortal nourishment to one like thee?
Ah! fret not thou at Fortune's petty stings,
Sorrow unlovely and unsanctified,
But strictly fortify the loftier heart,
Communing hourly with undying things;
And, without promptings of injurious pride,
Remember what thou wert and what thou art.

VII.

HUMILITY.

THOSE hills, so graceful, though to us not grand,
Are grand to children: shade-swept hill and dale
The same in beauty, on an ampler scale
With broader trees and shades, for them expand:
To them, the pebbles on the wet sea-sand
Are gems: to them each river brim and vale
Sends forth a thousand odours sweet and bland,
Too low for us to catch, too faint, too frail.
They see as far as we do: but their eye
Comparing all things with a humbler measure,
Exalts not less than multiplies their pleasure—
Ah that the moral world thus constantly
Might yield her gifts to our humility!
The smallest key unlocks the largest treasure.

VIII.

THE ISLAND OF INISFALLEN.

THE holy sunshine like a garment lay,
A sacerdotal vesture dense with gold,
On every shelving mound, and slumbrous wold,
As round and round we paced at noon our way.
Onward we paced by many a winding bay,
And hollow lawn that seemed to have ta'en its mould
From wave-like anthems rolling here of old,
While yet old rites maintained harmonious sway.
Green slopes we trod, majestic as the plains
Of sand disclosed by Ocean's ebbing tide:
Hard by were groves of ash through which we spied
The ruined convent with its weather-stains,
From whose calm bosom passed of old the strains
This Eden of blue lakes that sanctified.

IX.

To raise the triumph of victorious Art;
To poise a temple in the middle air;
To deck its walls with sculptures gravely fair
Or hues which trace the windings of the heart:
To pierce the maze of Science, and to part
Error from Truth, until thy sedulous care
Had made the moral map of Man as bare
Of doubt or hindrance as the Ocean's chart—
Was this thine aim, high Spirit? knew'st thou not
That, but one soul to lift and purify,
And keep a single day from sinful blot,
Exceeds the strength of frail mortality?
Take back awhile thy corals: and, untaught
To totter, be not emulous to fly.

X.

LOW COMPANY.

Sad Host of an ignoble company
Of hungry Cares that to thy sumptuous board
Troop, not unbidden, preying on their lord—
Mingling their shrill harsh voices with the glee
Of Pride and Sense, their friends of high degree;
If these, unmasked, are duteously abhorred,
If thou wouldst be once more from those restored
To peace, to honour, and to liberty;
Stamp on thy floor, and bid thy guests depart,
And fill thy gorgeous chambers with the poor:
Yea, press those outcasts to thine aching heart
Whom thou so long hast banished from thy door,
As if contagion issued from the eye
Of Want, or pleading Woe's melodious sigh.

XI.

Praise from the noble, from the gentle, Love,
Too oft unfairly won, or dearly bought,
By man may be accepted, though not sought,
And when accepted, honoured: for they rove,
Outcasts from Heaven, a world that loves them not—
If then they seek thy tent or sheltering grove,
Count them lost Angels to thy threshold brought
For rest, ere yet they wing their flight above.
Welcome those Strangers meekly when they come,
And gain their blessing when they seek the sky:
Strive not to keep them: Earth is not their home;
And Man must humbly live, and gladly die.
Death—Death, a dark-eyed Page, shall be his guide
To seats where Praise and Love with Life and Peace
abide.

XII.

A GLORIOUS Crown, if God maintain it, thou,
O Queen, hast rightfully inherited:
If not, even now it totters on thy head:
Therefore to Him present in time thy vow.
For thousands are there that have knit their brow
Against thy throne and thee: thousands have spread
Their hands against thee: yea, the shaft was sped
Long since, the venomed shaft on-flying now.
And yet despond not; for thy People's prayers,
And wise men wakeful all the livelong night,
Are striving for thee; and the brave will fight;
And all the good are fighting unawares
For thee. Away with comfortless despairs!
Power is of God; and He will guard the Right.

XIII.

THE golden splendour of the regal Crown
Shoots from the meekest brow a dazzling sheen
Painful to eyes malignant. King or Queen!
Think not of men, whether they smile or frown.
The Princely sceptre and the Priestly gown
Are symbols of eternal Power serene;
Visibly preaching Him who reigns unseen—
An impious deed it were to lay them down,
And to usurp that peace by Heaven bestowed
Upon the Holy Order of the Poor;
That genuine peace which can alone endure
While men are trained to mark the hand of God
Alike in all things; doing, each his part,
In low estate or high, with an untroubled heart.

XIV.

FAR rather let us loathe and scorn the power
Of Song, than seek her fane with hearts impure,
Panting for praise or pay, the vulgar lure
Of those on whom the Muse doth scantly shower,
Or not at all, her amaranthine dower:
Ye that would serve her, first of this be sure,
Her glorious Pæans will for aye endure
Whether or not she smile upon your bower.
Go forth, eternal Melodies, go forth
O'er all the world, and in your broad arms wind it!
Go forth, as ye are wont, from south to north;
No spot so barren but your spells can find it:
So long as Heaven is vaulted o'er the earth,
So long your power survives, and who can bind it?

XV.

FORM OF CONSECRATION FOR A NEW HOUSE.

I BLESS thy new-raised threshold: let us pray
That never faithless friend, insulting foe,
O'er this pure stone their hateful shadows throw:
May the poor gather round it day by day.
I bless this hearth: thy children here shall play:
Here may their graces and their virtues blow:
May sin defile it not; and want and woe
And sickness seldom come, nor come to stay.
I bless thy House. I consecrate the whole
To God. It is His Temple. Let it be
Worthy of Him, confided thus to thee.
Man's dwelling, like its lord, enshrines a soul:
It hath great destinies, wherein do lie,
Self-sown, the seeds of Immortality.

XVI.

TO AN INFANT.

Familiar Spirit! that so graciously
Dost take whatever fortune may befall,
Trusting thy fragile form to the arms of all,
And never counting it indignity
To sit caressed upon the humblest knee;
Thou, having yet no words, aloud dost call
Upon our hearts: the fever and the gall
Of our dark bosoms are reproved in thee.
From selfish fears and lawless wishes free,
Thou hast no painful feeling of thy weakness;
From shafts malign and pride's base agony
Protected by the pillows of thy meekness:
Thou hast thy little loves which do not grieve thee,
Unquiet make thee, or unhappy leave thee.

XVII.

EARTHLY HOPE.

Painter of Hope! too bright that brow, too fair;
Those eyes too eager; all too deep the flush
Upon that cheek! O bid those streams that gush
So warmly, backward to her heart repair,
And warm, if warm they can, the chillness there:
Make her unconscious hands deflower and crush
Those unblown buds: command the tears to rush
Into worn eyes that, sadly constant, stare
As if they strove the narrowing light to hold
Of some far object, gliding fast away.
Let this be Hope: then make her stand forlorn
Upon the shore disconsolate and cold
Of seas fast-ebbing, over which the morn
Begins to tremble with its ashy grey.

XVIII.

Ample, and vast, and infinitely still,
Slants down from the blue crystal of the sky,
Throne of the Muse, the Heliconian hill:
Citheron's frowning crest ascends hard by
With clouds and tempest plagued perpetually:
There walk those feet that fates unblest fulfil:
There tread the avenging Furies: wild and shrill
There rings the victim's shriek, the Mænad's cry.
Poets! let none deceive you; nor confound
Tumult with strength. Then most the Muse is calm,
Singing the strifes of sublunary things:
Steady her hand among the quivering strings:
No sorrow she approves that slights her balm:
Her toils are rest-ennobled, virtue-crowned!

XIX.

Nations, their mission o'er, their office done,
Are forcibly drawn downwards; and that tide
Which raised them, homeward summoned doth subside.
What man by art can stay the sinking sun,
Or Spring departing when her goal is won?
States too are transient! longer none may bide
When once, its lesson taught or place supplied,
That steadying weight by it sustained is gone.
Nations, be wise! Whate'er the course ye hold,
Strive that your furthest aim subservient be
To the virtuous progress of Humanity.
Woe to that greatness which commercial gold
Alone creates, or seals. Such leaves no trace,
Sinking; and lighter things float up into its place.

XX.

TO THE THAMES.

River, whose charge is from the winds and sky
The Imperial City's agitated ear
To soothe with murmur low and ceaseless cheer,
Do thy great, pious task perpetually:
But add a warning voice more deep and high:
Borne down from bridge to bridge in smooth career
Tell her to whom the pomp of gold is dear,
Of Tyre that fell; of Fortune's perfidy!
Tell her, whilst on thy broad and glimmering mirror
The shadows of her turrets tremble and slide,
How brief the impress of victorious Pride,
How nearly Triumph is allied to Terror.
Demons their nests in ship-mast forests hide—
By nobleness, not gold, are Nations deified.

XXI.

'IN ALL THINGS LOYALTY.'

One Virtue reigned supreme in days gone by,
Familiarly beloved, with awe obeyed:
The name survives amongst us—Loyalty:
By her all natural ties were Virtues made:
All Virtues, humble while their Queen stood nigh,
Unsunned remained, and pure, beneath the shade:
Without her now, they strut in masquerade,
Vainglorious pageants for the public eye!
Sans-foy! Sans-loy! Sans-joy!—the Patron Saints
Which every modern warrior, on his casque
Blazons—each scribe on his phylactery!
How will ye better help a land that faints
With hunger, long and vainly do I ask,
Than ancient Faith, or Hope, or Charity?

XXII.

MILTON VISITING GALILEO IN HIS BLINDNESS.

BEHOLD how long, and with what earnest eye
He gazes on that venerable face,
And forehead heavenward lifted! Doth he trace
In that calm symbol of serenity
And sorrow mastered with a loftier grace,
The shadow of his own high destiny;
Virtue contending with the pride of place,
Blindness, unhonoured age, and penury?
Yes—ye are like, though Time not yet hath marred
The lightest of those locks; nor anguish pressed
The signet of her silence cold and hard
Upon those lips so lovely in their rest:
Yes—ye are like, as morn is like to even,
Or trance of Summer-noon to Winter's frozen heaven.

XXIII.

THE OLD AGE OF MILTON.

I KNEW him. Blind and pale, but undepressed,
He sat beneath his hovel's silent shade,
Sternly quiescent. At his feet were laid
Two forms reclining there in heavenly rest:
One held a book; his hand the other kissed
With awe; but while the younger daughter read
I saw the mournful drooping of his head,
I saw the sideway leaning of his breast
Like Theseus bending o'er the Minotaur.
Supported on one hand, he seemed to gaze
Into the face of some accursèd thing—
O Nation, self-enslaving more and more,
And thou, disastrous, nation-selling King,
Why trouble ye this blind man old in days?

XXIV.

For we the mighty mountain plains have trod
Both in the glow of sunset and sunrise;
And lighted by the moon of southern skies!
The snow-white torrent of the thundering flood
We two have watched together: In the wood
We two have felt the warm tears dim our eyes
While zephyrs softer than an infant's sighs
Ruffled the light air of our solitude!
O Earth, maternal Earth, and thou, O Heaven,
And Night first-born, who now, e'en now, dost waken
The host of stars, thy constellated train!
Tell me if those can ever be forgiven,
Those abject, who together have partaken
These Sacraments of Nature—and in vain?

XXV.

Flowers growing to the level of the hand;
Flowers we may pluck without the toil of stooping;
And fruits from orchard branches gently drooping,
To our warm lips by every Zephyr fanned;
Delights, timid, yet tame, that come fast trooping,
Like birds that hear a well-known summons bland,
Such are the joys we hold at our command;
The joys that we escape, for ever scooping
The insalubrious mines of sensual Care
For stuff to load a back already weary,
Or climbing mountain ridges dark and bare
In search of colder winds, and views more dreary.
Ah, fatal Contradiction! do we roam,
Hoping to fly from self, or find a home?

XXVI.

MARCELLA.—1.

Marcella! those that to the Gods are dear
On thee may gaze with forehead undepressed:
Thy sire, thy brothers thou hast oft caressed,
And others are there, men whom all revere,
On whom thou canst not look with eye austere:
Nay, there may come a time when on thy breast
Or knee, a child of thine in sleep may rest
Or upward gaze untroubled with a fear.
But we, Marcella, never without awe
Approach thee; never without awe depart:
To us thy gentlest words are as a law:
The sacred wisdom of the virgin heart
Shines through these clear calm eyes, and to thine hand
Commits unseen a sceptre of command.

XXVII.

MARCELLA.—2.

Eyes justly levelled, searching yet sedate,
A marble brow enthroning a still light,
A cheek that neither seeks nor shuns our sight,
A form severely fair, on which aye wait
All natural emblems of unboastful state;
A step reserved, yet steadied by the might
Of fearless frankness, garments dark as night,
A breast the Loves in vain would penetrate—
Thou hast no wishes: for the vestal Spirit
As with a beaming breastplate doth repel
Whate'er of troubled joy with her would dwell.
The brave with thee approval find, not merit:
Thy first of duties deem'st thou this—to scorn
Whatever is not of the Immortals born.

XXVIII.

RATIONALISM.

Notions of notions docketed and classed:
Shadows self-chased along a barren ground:
Pale tracks of foam in wandering waves half-drowned:
Thin shreds of song half lost in winter's blast—
These starved and squalid Systems cannot last:
Vainly man's plummet the great deep would sound,
Man's arms enclose within their pigmy bound
Of sense, the Present, Future, and the Past.
Well skilled to trace the diagrams of thought,
Our modern Muse (with aid of compass) shines
In abstract lore of surfaces and lines;
Courses along Truth's limits; enters not;
Steps not across the threshold; dares not tread
The space within devote to God and to the dead!

XXIX.

System o'erstrained offends through haughtiness:
Hours chained to tasks, resolves in steel arrayed,
Words strict as edicts, measured each, and weighed,
Are well; but nought is healthy in excess.
Our thoughts grow tangled in their phalanxes:
And oft, by inward discipline betrayed,
From outward things we win a lowlier aid,
From chance a surer guide in our distress.
With her habitual, half-unconscious kindness,
Nature, our sweet companionable friend,
Upon our forehead breathes and clears our blindness,
Sends her familiar sprites our steps to tend,
A scent, a sound, a swan that cuts the lake,
To lure dark fancies brightening in her wake!

XXX.

SOLITUDE WITHOUT VOCATION.

In this Seclusion, from the world secure,
Her frauds, her force, her clamour, and her din,
O what a prosperous height might virtue win,
If, entering first these courts, the soul were pure!
But to a tainted soul, how weak the lure
Of outward things compared with snares within,
Where thought tracks thought, insatiable pursuer,
On through the inmost caves of lurking sin—
Dark thoughts which nobler presences had scared,
And palpable duties crushed! Ah, well of old
Fabled the priest, if priest he were or bard,
His Dian strenuous of life and bold:
A Huntress o'er the mountain summits hard,
Her couch beside the fountain calm but cold.

THE YEAR OF SORROW

AND OTHER POEMS.

TO

HIS EMINENCE

CARDINAL NEWMAN,

THESE POEMS ARE ONCE MORE DEDICATED

WITH RESPECT, AFFECTION, AND GRATITUDE.

THE YEAR OF SORROW—IRELAND—1849.

I.—SPRING.

ONCE more, through God's high will, and grace
Of hours that each its task fulfils,
Heart-healing Spring resumes her place,
The valley throngs and scales the hills;

In vain. From earth's deep heart o'ercharged
The exulting life runs o'er in flowers;
The slave unfed is unenlarged:
In darkness sleep a Nation's powers.

Who knows not Spring? Who doubts, when blows
Her breath, that Spring is come indeed?
The swallow doubts not; nor the rose
That stirs, but wakes not; nor the weed.

I feel her near, but see her not;
For these with pain uplifted eyes
Fall back repulsed, and vapours blot
The vision of the earth and skies.

I see her not: I feel her near,
As, charioted in mildest airs,
She sails through yon empyreal sphere,
And in her arms and bosom bears

That urn of flowers and lustral dews
Whose sacred balm, o'er all things shed,
Revives the weak, the old renews,
And crowns with votive wreaths the dead.

Once more the cuckoo's call I hear;
I know, in many a glen profound,
The earliest violets of the year
Rise up like water from the ground.

The thorn I know once more is white;
And, far down many a forest dale,
The anemonies in dubious light
Are trembling like a bridal veil.

By streams released that singing flow
From craggy shelf through sylvan glades
The pale narcissus, well I know,
Smiles hour by hour on greener shades.

The honeyed cowslip tufts once more
The golden slopes; with gradual ray
The primrose stars the rock, and o'er
The wood-path strews its milky way.

From ruined huts and holes come forth
Old men, and look upon the sky!
The Power Divine is on the earth:
Give thanks to God before ye die!

And ye, O children worn and weak!
Who care no more with flowers to play,
Lean on the grass your cold, thin cheek,
And those slight hands, and, whispering, say,

'Stern mother of a race unblest,
In promise kindly, cold in deed,—
Take back, O Earth, into thy breast,
The children whom thou wilt not feed.'

II.—SUMMER.

Approved by works of love and might,
The Year, consummated and crowned,
Hath scaled the zenith's purple height,
And flings his robe the earth around.

Impassioned stillness, fervours calm,
Brood, vast and bright, o'er land and deep:
The warrior sleeps beneath the palm;
The dark-eyed captive guards his sleep.

The Iberian labourer rests from toil;
Sicilian virgins twine the dance;
Laugh Tuscan vales in wine and oil;
Fresh laurels flash from brows of France.

Far off, in regions of the North,
The hunter drops his winter fur;
Sun-wakened babes their feet stretch forth;
And nested dormice feebly stir.

But thou, O land of many woes!
What cheer is thine? Again the breath
Of proved Destruction o'er thee blows,
And sentenced fields grow black in death.

In horror of a new despair
His blood-shot eyes the peasant strains,
With hands clenched fast, and lifted hair,
Along the daily darkening plains.

'Why trusted he to them his store?
Why feared he not the scourge to come?'
Fool! turn the page of History o'er—
The roll of Statutes—and be dumb!

Behold, O People! thou shalt die!
What art thou better than thy sires?
The hunted deer a weeping eye
Turns on his birthplace, and expires.

Lo! as the closing of a book,
Or statue from its base o'erthrown,
Or blasted wood, or dried-up brook,
Name, race, and nation, thou art gone!

The stranger shall thy hearth possess;
The stranger build upon thy grave:
But know this also—he, not less,
His limit and his term shall have.

Once more thy volume, open cast,
In thunder forth shall sound thy name;
Thy forest, hot at heart, at last
God's breath shall kindle into flame.

Thy brook dried up a cloud shall rise,
And stretch an hourly widening hand,
In God's good vengeance, through the skies,
And onward o'er the Invader's land.

Of thine, one day, a remnant left
Shall raise o'er earth a Prophet's rod,
And teach the coasts of Faith bereft
The names of Ireland, and of God.

III.—AUTUMN.

Then die, thou Year—thy work is done:
The work ill done is done at last:
Far off, beyond that sinking sun
Which sets in blood, I hear the blast

That sings thy dirge, and says—'Ascend,
And answer make amid thy peers,
Since all things here must have an end,
Thou latest of the famine years!'

I join that voice. No joy have I
In all thy purple and thy gold;
Nor in that nine-fold harmony
From forest on to forest rolled;

Nor in that stormy western fire
Which burns on ocean's gloomy bed,
And hurls, as from a funeral pyre,
A glare that strikes the mountain's head;

And writes on low-hung clouds its lines
Of cyphered flame, with hurrying hand;
And flings amid the topmost pines
That crown the cliff, a burning brand.

Make answer, Year, for all thy dead,
Who found not rest in hallowed earth;
The widowed wife, the father fled,
The babe age-stricken from his birth.

Make answer, Year, for virtue lost;
For courage proof 'gainst fraud and force
Now waning like a noontide ghost;
Affections poisoned at their source.

The labourer spurned his lying spade;
The yeoman spurned his useless plough;
The pauper spurned the unwholesome aid
Obtruded once, exhausted now.

The roof-trees fall of hut and hall;
I hear them fall, and falling cry,
'One fate for each, one fate for all;
So wills the Law that willed a lie.'

Dread power of Man! what spread the waste
In circles hour by hour more wide,
And would not let the past be past?
That Law which promised much, and lied.

Dread power of God; Whom mortal years
Nor touch, nor tempt: Who sitt'st sublime
In night of night,—O bid thy spheres
Resound at last a funeral chime!

Call up at last the afflicted race,
Whom Man, not God, abolished. Sore,
For centuries, their strife : the place
That knew them once shall know no more !

IV.—WINTER.

Fall, snow, and cease not ! Flake by flake
The decent winding-sheet compose :
Thy task is just and pious ; make
An end of blasphemies and woes.

Fall, flake by flake ! by thee alone,
Last friend, the sleeping draught is given :
Kind nurse, by thee the couch is strewn,
The couch whose covering is from Heaven.

Descend and clasp the mountain's crest ;
Inherit plain and valley deep :
This night on thy maternal breast
A vanquished nation dies in sleep.

Lo ! from the starry Temple Gates
Death rides, and bears the flag of peace :
The combatants he separates ;
He bids the wrath of ages cease.

Descend, benignant Power ! But O,
Ye torrents, shake no more the vale :
Dark streams, in silence seaward flow :
Thou rising storm, remit thy wail.

Shake not, to-night, the cliffs of Moher,
Nor Brandon's base, rough sea! Thou Isle,
The Rite proceeds! From shore to shore,
Hold in thy gathered breath the while.

Fall, snow! in stillness fall, like dew,
On church's roof and cedar's fan;
And mould thyself on pine and yew;
And on the awful face of Man.

Without a sound, without a stir,
In streets and wolds, on rock and mound,
O, omnipresent Comforter,
By thee, this night, the lost are found!

On quaking moor and mountain moss,
With eyes upstaring at the sky,
And arms extended like a cross,
The long-expectant sufferers lie.

Bend o'er them, white-robed Acolyte!
Put forth thine hand from cloud and mist;
And minister the last sad Rite,
Where altar there is none, nor priest.

Touch thou the gates of soul and sense;
Touch darkening eyes and dying ears;
Touch stiffening hands and feet, and thence
Remove the trace of sins and tears.

And, ere thou seal those filmèd eyes,
Into God's urn thy fingers dip,
And lay, 'mid eucharistic sighs,
The sacred wafer on the lip.

This night the Absolver issues forth :
  This night the Eternal Victim bleeds :—
O winds and woods ; O heaven and earth !
  Be still this night. The Rite proceeds !

TO BURNS'S 'HIGHLAND MARY.'

O LOVED by him whom Scotland loves,
  Long loved, and honoured duly
By all who love the bard who sang
  So sweetly and so truly !
In cultured dales his song prevails ;
  Thrills o'er the eagle's aëry—
Has any caught that strain, nor sighed
  For Burns's 'Highland Mary' ?

I wandered on from hill to hill,
  I feared nor wind nor weather,
For Burns beside me trode the moor,
  Beside me pressed the heather.
I read his verse : his life—alas !
  O'er that dark shades extended :—
With thee at last, and him in thee,
  My thoughts their wanderings ended.

His golden hours of youth were thine ;
  Those hours whose flight is fleetest
Of all his songs to thee he gave
  The freshest and the sweetest.

Ere ripe the fruit one branch he brake,
All rich with bloom and blossom;
And shook its dews, its incense shook,
Above thy brow and bosom.

And when his Spring, alas, how soon!
Had vanished, self-subverted,
His Summer, like a god repulsed,
Had from his gates departed;
Beneath that evening star, once more,
Star of his morn and even!
To thee his suppliant hands he spread,
And hailed his love 'in heaven.'

And if his spirit in 'a waste
Of shame' too oft was squandered,
And if too oft his feet ill-starred
In ways erroneous wandered;
Yet still his spirit's spirit bathed
In purity eternal;
And all fair things through thee retained
For him their aspect vernal.

Nor less that tenderness remained
Thy favouring love implanted;
Compunctious pity, yearnings vague
For love to earth not granted;
Reserve with freedom, female grace
Well matched with manly vigour,
In songs where fancy twined her wreaths
Round judgment's stalwart rigour.

A mute but strong appeal was made
To him by feeblest creatures:

In his large heart had each a part
That part had found in Nature's.
The wildered sheep, sagacious dog,
Old horse reduced and crazy;
The field-mouse by the plough upturned,
And violated daisy.

In him there burned that passionate glow
All Nature's soul and savour,
Which gives its hue to every flower,
To every fruit its flavour:
Nor less the kindred power he felt;
That love of all things human
Whereof the fiery centre is
The love man bears to woman.

He sang the dignity of man,
Sang woman's grace and goodness;
Passed by the world's half-truths; her lies
Pierced through with lance-like shrewdness:
Upon life's broad highways he stood,
And aped nor Greek nor Roman;
But snatched from heaven Promethean fire
To glorify things common.

He sang of youth, he sang of age,
Their joys, their griefs, their labours
Felt with, not for, the people; hailed
All Scotland's sons his neighbours:
And therefore all repeat his verse,
Hot youth, or greybeard steady,
The boatman on Loch Etive's wave,
The shepherd on Ben Ledi.

He sang from love of song; his name
Dunedin's cliff resounded:
He left her, faithful to a fame
On truth and nature founded:
He sought true fame, not loud acclaim;
Himself and Time he trusted:
For laurels crackling in the flame
His fine ear never lusted.

He loved, and reason had to love,
The illustrious land that bore him:
Where'er he went, like heaven's broad tent
A star-bright Past hung o'er him:
Each isle had fenced a saint recluse,
Each tower a hero dying;
Down every mountain-gorge had rolled
The flood of foemen flying.

From age to age that land had paid
No alien throne submission;
For feudal faith had been her Law,
And freedom her Tradition.
Where frowned the rocks had Freedom smiled,
Sung 'mid the shrill wind's whistle—
So England prized her garden Rose,
But Scotland loved her Thistle.

Fair field alone the brave demand,
And Scotland ne'er had lost it;
And honest prove the hate and love
To objects meet adjusted:
Her will and way had ne'er been crossed
In fatal contradiction;
Nor loyalty to treason soured,
Nor faith abused with fiction.

Can song be false where hearts are sound?
Weak doubts, away we fling them!
The land that breeds great men, great deeds,
Shall ne'er lack bards to sing them:
That vigour, sense, and mutual truth
Which baffled each invader,
Shall fill her marts, and feed her arts,
While peaceful olives shade her.

Honour to Scotland and to Burns!
In him she stands collected:
A thousand streams one river make—
Thus Genius, heaven-directed,
Conjoins all separate veins of power
In one great soul-creation;
Thus blends a million men to make
The Poet of the nation.

Be green for aye, green bank and brae
Around Montgomery's Castle!
Blow there, ye earliest flowers! and there,
Ye sweetest song-birds, nestle!
For there was ta'en that last farewell
In hope, indulged how blindly;
And there was given that long last gaze
'That dwelt' on him 'sae kindly.'

No word of thine recorded stands;
Few words that hour were spoken:
Two Bibles there were interchanged,
And some slight love-gift broken:
And there thy cold faint hands he pressed,
Thy head by dew-drops misted;
And kisses, ill-resisted first,
At last were unresisted.

Ah cease!—she died. He too is dead.
Of all her girlish graces
Perhaps one nameless lock remains:
The rest stern Time effaces—
Dust lost in dust. Not so: a bloom
Is hers that ne'er can wither;
And in that lay which lives for aye
The twain live on together.

PSYCHE; OR, AN OLD POET'S LOVE.—1847.

I.

O WESTERN Isle that gave her birth!
O Delos of a holier sea!
O casket of uncounted worth!
How dear thou art to Love and me!

Thy whispering woods, in some soft dell,
Now charmed, now broke the Infant's rest;
Thy vales the wild-flower cherished well,
Predestined for the Virgin's breast.

May airs salubrious, gusts of balm,
On all thy shores incumbent, blow
Thy billow from the glassy calm,
And fringe thy myrtles with sea-snow!

My Psyche's lips thy zephyrs breathe;
My Psyche's feet thy pastures tread:—

O Isle of isles, around me wreathe
Thine asphodels when I am dead.

II.

How blue were Ariadne's eyes,
When from the sea's horizon line,
At eve, she raised them on the skies!
My Psyche, bluer far are thine.

How pallid, snatched from falling flowers,
The cheek averse of Proserpine,
Unshadowed yet by Stygian bowers!
My Psyche, paler far is thine.

Yet thee no lover e'er forsook;
No tyrant urged with love unkind:
Thy joy the ungentle could not brook;
Thy light would strike the unworthy blind.

A golden flame invests thy tresses:
An azure flame invests thine eyes:
And well that wingless form expresses
Communion with relinquished skies.

Forbear, O breezes of the West,
To waft her to her native bourne;
For heavenly, by her feet impressed,
Becomes our ancient earth outworn!

On Psyche's life our beings hang:
In Psyche life and love are one:—
My Psyche glanced at me and sang,
'Perhaps to-morrow I am gone!'

III.—PSYCHE'S BATH.

O stream beloved! O stream unknown!
In which my love has bathed,
Be still thy fount unvexed with floods
Thy marge by heats unscathed!

How oft her white hand tempted thine!
How oft, by fears delayed,
Ere yet her light had filled thy depth,
With thee her shadow played!

Thy purity encompassed hers;
Thy crystal cased my pearl;
Of founts, the fairest fount embraced
Of girls, the loveliest girl!

May still thy lilies round thee wave,
As shaken by a sigh!
Thy violets, blooming where she gazed,
Bloom first and latest die!

May better bards, when I am gone,
Like birds salute thy bower;
And each that sings thee grow in heart
A virgin from that hour!

IV.—PSYCHE'S STUDY.

The low sun smote the topmost rocks,
Ascending o'er the eastern sea:
Backward my Psyche waved her locks,
And held her book upon her knee.

No brake was near, no flower, no bird,
No music but the ocean wave,

That with complacent murmur stirred
The echoes of a neighbouring cave.

Absorbed my Psyche sat, her face
Reflecting Plato's sun-like soul,
And seemed in every word to trace
The pent-up spirit of the whole.

Absorbed she sat in breathless mood,
Unmoved as kneeler at a shrine,
Save one slight finger that pursued
The meaning on from line to line.

As some white flower in forest nook
Bends o'er its own face in a well,
So seemed the virgin in that book
Her soul, unread before, to spell.

Sudden, a crimson butterfly
On that illumined page alit:—
My Psyche flung the volume by,
And sister-like, gave chase to it!

V.

Nearer yet, by soft degrees,
Nearer nestling by my side,
Her arm she propped upon my knees;
Her head, ere long, its place supplied.

Mysteriously a child there lurked
Within that soaring spirit wild:
Mysteriously a woman worked
Imprisoned in that fearless child.

One thought before me, like a star,
Rolled onward ever, always on;
It called me to the fields afar,
In which triumphant palms are won.

The concourse of far years I heard
Applausive as a summer sea:—
My trance was broken: Psyche stirred;—
'Is Psyche nothing then to thee?'

VI.

Ah, that a lightly-lifted hand
Should thus man's soul depress or raise,
And wield, as with a magic wand,
A spirit steeled in earlier days!

Ah, that a voice whose speech is song,
Whose pathos weeps, whose gladness smiles,
Should melt a heart unmoved so long,
And charm it to the Syren Isles!

Ah, that one presence, morn or eve,
Should fill deserted halls with light;
One breeze-like step, departing, leave
The noonday darker than the night!

Thy power is great: but Love and Youth
Conspire with thee. With thee they dwell:
From those kind eyes in tenderest ruth
On mine they look and say, 'Farewell!'

VII.

Love! Love the avenger! Had I deemed
There lived such beauty, ere too late,
But once of Psyche had I dreamed,
How different had been my fate!

I heard of Virtue, and believed:
But till that glorious face I saw,
Her image in my soul conceived
Possessed me less with love than awe.

It was mine own infirmity:—
I heard, believed; but Faith was weak:
The Syren-Muse for ever nigh,
Forbade me heavenlier lights to seek.

Deposed I stand by power divine:
The robes of Song are changed for chains;
To love my Psyche; this is mine;
To love—not seek her—this remains.

VIII.—PSYCHE DRAWING.

Of mind all light, and tenderest-handed,
She sketched, untaught, an infant's face,
And as the ideal Thought expanded,
Stamped, line by line, a deepening grace.

Not pilotless her fancy dreamed,
Though borne through shoreless seas and air:
From native regions on her beamed
The archetypes of True and Fair.

As when the Spring with touches pure
  Evolves some blossom, hour by hour,
So Psyche's Thought became mature;
  So Psyche nursed her human flower.

The billowy locks, the look intense,
  The eyes so piercing, sweet, and wild!—
I cried, inspired by sudden sense,
  'Thus Psyche looked, an infant child!'

IX.—PSYCHE'S REMORSE.

A word unkind, yet scarce unkind,
  Was sweetened by so soft a smile,
It lingered long in heart and mind,
  Yet hardly woke a pang the while.

At night she dreamed that I was dead;
  And wished to touch, yet feared to stir,
The heavy hands beside me laid,
  Incapable of love and her.

We met at morning: still her breast
  Rose gently with a mournful wave:
And of the flowers thereon, the best
  She gave; and kissed before she gave.

X.—PSYCHE SINGING.

Between the green hill and the cloud
  The skylark loosed his silver chain
Of rapturous music, clear and loud—
  My Psyche answered back the strain!

A glory rushed along the sky;
  She sang, and all dark things grew plain;
Hope, starlike, shone; and Memory
  Flashed like a cypress gemmed with rain.

Once more the skylark recommenced;
  Once more from heaven his challenge rang:
Again with him my Psyche fenced;
  At last the twain commingled sang.

Then first I learned the skylark's lore;
  Then first the words he sang I knew:
My soul with rapture flooded o'er
  As breeze-borne gossamer with dew.

XI.

Wert thou a child, O gladness then
  Thy hand in mine to roam the woods,
And teach that child in vale or glen
  To scale the rocks, nor fear the floods!

What joy the page of ancient lore
  To turn: her dawn of thought to watch:
And from her kindling eyes once more
  The sunrise of old times to catch!

Wert thou an infant, then my arms
  Might lift thee in the light; and I
The captive were of infant charms:—
  From such at least no need to fly!

Wert thou my sister, Love would swear
  To own thenceforth no haughtier name:
Whatever form that Soul might wear,
  The spell would be to me the same.

It is not love that rules my heart,
Nor aught by mortals named or known:
I know but this;—when near thou art,
I live. I die when thou art gone.

XII.

As when—deep chaunts abruptly stayed—
The Thoughts that, music-born, advanced
In tides of puissance, music-swayed
And waves that in the glory danced,

Contract, subside, and leave at last,
Where late the abounding floods were spread,
A vale of darkness, grim and vast,
A buried river's rocky bed;

Thus—when thou goest—my heart, my life
Descend to dim sepulchral caves;
My world, but late with rapture rife,
Becomes a world of rocks and graves.

Come back! From mountain-cells afar,
My soul's strong river shall return:
Come back! Again the Morning Star
Shall shine against the exhaustless urn.

XIII.

My Psyche laid her silken hand
Upon my silver head,
And said, 'To thee shall I remand
The light of seasons fled?'

The child bent o'er me as she spake;
And, leaning yet more near,

A tress that kissed me for Love's sake,
Removed from me a tear.

Psyche, not so! lest life should grow
Near thee too deeply sweet;
And I who censure Death as slow
Should fear her far-off feet.

Eternal sweetness, love, and truth,
Are in thy face enshrined;
The breathing soul of endless youth
On wafts thee like a wind.

Those eyes, where'er they chance to gaze,
Might wake to songs the dumb!
Breathe thou upon my blighted bays—
Rose-odoured they become!

Yet go, and cheer a happier throng:
For Death, a spouse dark-eyed,
On me her eyes hath levelled long,
And calls me to her side.

O'er yon not distant coast, even now,
What shape ascends? A Tomb.
Farewell, my Psyche!—why shouldst thou
Be shadowed by its gloom?

XIV.

'Can Love be just? can Hope be wise?
Can Youth renew his honours dead?'—
On me my Psyche turned her eyes;
And all my great resolves were fled.

Psyche, I said, when thou art nigh
  Transpicuous grow the mists of years:
I cannot ever wholly die
  If on my grave should drop thy tears.

Nor thine a part in mortal hours:
  Thy flower nor autumn knows, nor May:
Thou bendest from sidereal bowers
  A dateless glory, fresh for aye!

Though I be nothing, yet the best
  To thee no gift of price could give:—
Fall then, in radiance, on my breast,
  And in thy blessing bid me live!

XV.

Pure lip coralline, slightly stirred;
  Thus stir; but speak not! Love can see
On you the syllables unheard
  Which are his only melody.

Pure, drooping lids; dark lashes wet
  With that unhoped-for, trembling tear;
Thus droop; thus meet; nor give me yet
  The eyes that I desire, yet fear.

Hands lightly clasped on meekest knee;
  All-beauteous head, as by a spell
Bent forward; loveliest form, to me
  A lovely Soul made visible;—

Speak not! move not! More tender grows
  The heart, long musing. Night may plead,

Perhaps, my part; and, at its close,
The morning bring me light indeed.

XVI.

'Such beauty was not born to die!'
That thought above my fancy kept
Hovering like moonbeams tremulously;
And as its lustre waned, I slept.

Deep Love kept vigil. Where she sate
Methought I sought her. Ah the change!
Youth freezes at the frown of Fate;
And Time defied will have revenge.

The summer sunshine of her head
Had changed to moonlight tresses grey:
O'er all her countenance was spread
The twilight of a winter's day.

Dim as a misty tree ere morn,
Sad as a tide-deserted strand,
She sate, with roseless lip forlorn:—
I knelt, and, reverent, kissed her hand.

I loved her. Whom I loved of yore,
A shape all lustrous from the skies,
I loved that hour, and loved far more,
So sweet in this unjust disguise.

A human tenderness, a love,
More deep than loves of prosperous years,
Through all my spirit rose and strove,
And, cloud-like, o'er her sank in tears.

XVII.

She leaves us! Many a gentler breast
Will mourn our common loss like me:
The babe her hand, her voice caressed,
The lamb that couched beside her knee.

The touch thou lovest—the robe's far gleam—
Thou shalt not find, thou dark-eyed fawn!
Thy light is lost, exultant stream:
Dim woods, your sweetness is withdrawn.

Descend dark heavens, and flood with rain
Their crimson roofs; their silence rout:
Their vapour-laden branches strain;
And force the smothered sadness out!

That so the ascended moon, when breaks
The cloud, may light once more a scene
Fair as some cheek that suffering makes
Only more tearfully serene:

That so the vale she loved may look
Calm as some cloister roofed with snows,
Wherein, unseen, in shadowy nook,
A buried Vestal finds repose.

XVIII.

Ah! Grief had but begun to grieve
When thus I trifled with my sighs:
Who brings what Psyche brought must leave
The loss no song can harmonise.

She brought me back the buried years;
And glorious in her light they shone:

Once more their sun is set; and tears
Deface their care-worn aspect wan.

Old joys, old sorrows,—ghosts unlaid,—
In every dirge-like breeze go by:
Loved phantoms haunt the unwholesome shade:
Ah then revived they but to die?

They die, like music: like a tide
They ebb through darkness far away:
Till, meeting Lethè, side by side
The rivers roll that love not day.

XIX.

Cold Fount, I sing thee not, although
Thy wave has cooled abandoned hands:
Sing thou, cold-lipped, in whispers low,
The praises of thy shells and sands.

Dark cave that, lenient, in the woods
Didst breathe thy darkness o'er my day,
I sing thee not, though sullen moods
Relaxed in thee, and waned away.

The Shepherd youth whose love is fled
Lies outcast in some lonely place:
But o'er his eyes her veil is spread,
And airy kisses touch his face.

Beneath that veil his eyes may stream;
Beneath that heaven his heart may heave:
The day goes by him like a dream,
And comfort comes to him at eve.

He sings: her name makes sweet his strains:
  Such solace suits a stripling's years—
For age what healing herb remains?
  Nor love, nor hope, nor song, nor tears.

XX.

What art thou? If thou liv'st, I know
  That thou art good, and true, and fair:
But Love, the Avenger, whispers low
  At times, 'Thy passion paints the air!

'Love's fair, true world thou deem'dst at first
  Was only fair through Fancy's gleam:—
At last thou lov'st, with doom reversed,
  As beauteous Truth a Poet's dream.

'Too late thy Fancy, tired of dust,
  Unsphered a Spirit. Self-enthralled,
It worships now, because it must,
  An Idol pride at first installed.

'Or else the pathos of the Past
  Above thy Present moves in power;
And o'er thy sultry day hath cast
  This dewdrop from its matin hour.

'In her thou lov'st the times gone by;
  In her the joys possessed—not missed:—
It was not Hope, but Memory
  Thy dreaming lids that bent and kissed.

'In her the dawning lawns forlorn
  Thou lov'st; the lights along them flung

The witcheries of the wakening morn;
The echo of its latest song.

'Thou tread'st once more Castalia's brink:—
Far down, thy youth finds rest from trouble:
And thou, that saw'st it slowly sink,
Dost watch its latest-breaking bubble.'

XXI.—PSYCHE'S BRIDAL SONG.

When now had come the marriage day,
The church was decked, and nigh the hour,
My Psyche said, 'One other lay,
To bless the bride, and bless the bower!'

My Psyche's eyes in gladness swim;
His gladness, doubled in her breast:
All that she is, and has, to him
She gives, not doubting; and is blest.

She walks on air; she lifts her brow
Like one inspired:—Such light as flushes
The Alps at morn, upon its snow
Is stayed, in glory, not in blushes.

Her world of dream has ta'en its flight!
The shadow passed: the substance came:
A Soul that long had fed on light
Love touched, and kindled into flame.

Ah heart of hearts! ah life of life!
My Psyche to another given!—
The vow that changes Maid to Wife
Is pledged to-day, and heard in Heaven!

And must she change? And must that wing
So soaring, leave its native sky?
Then, fairest, purest, o'er thee fling
The lightest-robed mortality!

Ah! now her other life begins;
The soft submission, humble pride;
The smile tear-dipp'd; the loss that wins;
The life transfused and multiplied!

Even now, large heart, thy wish is this:—
That from that altar love might stream,
And bathe a sorrowing world in bliss!
That wish shall end not like a dream.

Good works, good will, shall round her spread;
The desert blossom, and the waste:
The poor man's prayer her golden head
Shall crown with lustres ne'er displaced.

Go now, my Psyche: meet the throngs
That sprinkle flowers and banners wave;—
Take, Psyche, take, my last of songs;
And keep a garland for a grave.

SONNETS WRITTEN IN TRAVEL.

I.

GIOTTO'S CAMPANILE AT FLORENCE.

INCHASED with precious marbles, pure and rare,
Iow gracefully it soars, and seems the while
'rom every polished stage to laugh and smile,
'laying with gleams of that clear southern air!
'it resting-place methinks its summit were
'or a descended Angel! happy isle
Iid life's rough sea of sorrow, force, and guile,
'or Saint of royal race, or vestal fair,
n this seclusion—call it not a prison—
'loistering a bosom innocent and lonely:
) Tuscan Priestess! gladly would I watch
All night one note of thy loud hymn to catch
Sent forth to greet the sun, when first, new-risen,
He shines on that aërial station only!

II.

OLD PICTURES AT FLORENCE.

THRICE happy they who thus before man's eyes
Restored the placid image of his prime;
Illustrating th' abortive shows of Time
With gleams authentic caught from Paradise.
Those Godlike forms are men! Impure disguise
By us now suffered! O for wings to climb
Once more to Virtue's mountain seats sublime,
And *be* what here we poorly recognise!
From these fair pictures our Humanity.
Looks down upon us kindly. 'Tis no dream:
Truth stands attested by Consistency;
And all the Virtues here in peace supreme
So meet, so blend, that in those Forms we see,
The sum of all we are and fain would be.

III.

ON A PICTURE BY COREGGIO AT PARMA.

PAINT thou the pearl gates of the Morning Star,
Loftiest of Painters, and the loveliest;
For only of thy pencil worthy are
Those ever-smiling mansions of the blest!
Thyself when homeward summoned to thy rest
Couldst scarce have marked our earth's receding bar
No happier shapes could greet thee, near or far,
Than oft in life thy radiant fancy drest.
God, when He framed the earth, beheld it good:
The light from His approving smile that shone
For thee waned never from her features wan:
Before thine eyes—unfallen if unrenewed—
Still moved that Race supreme and fairest made;
And Love and Joy, twin stars, still on their forehead
played.

IV.

COREGGIO'S CUPOLAS AT PARMA.

REATURES all eyes and brows, and tresses streaming,
y speed divine blown back:—within, all fire
f wondering zeal, and storm of bright desire;
ound the broad dome the immortal throngs are beaming:
Vith elemental Powers the vault is teeming:
Ve gaze, and, gazing, join the fervid choir,
n spirit launched on wings that ne'er can tire,
ike those that buoy the breasts of children dreaming.
'he exquisitest hand that e'er in light
Revealed the subtlest smile of new-born pleasure,
Here sounds the abysses, and attains the height,
s strong the strength of heavenly hosts to measure,
Draws back the azure curtain of the skies,
And antedates our promised Paradise.

V.

TO ITALY.

O ITALY, how beautiful thou wert,
If in thee dwelt an answerable soul!
Fair in each feature, perfect in each part,
That, that thou lack'st which should inspire the whole:
Thine are all gifts of nature, all of art;
Yet a slow sadness we cannot control
Steals, as we gaze, o'er the dejected heart,
And our checked passion meets too soon its goal.
Beyond the mark of Virtue thou hast shot
(For only Virtue's ornaments are thine)
And so fallen short of Greatness. Solid Thought,
Strength, courage, prudence—all, save Truths divine,
Thou hast corrupted. Therefore falls thy hand,
Prone, and unsceptred of its old command.

VI.

GENOA.

Ah! what avails it, Genoa, now to thee
That Doria, feared by monarchs, once was thine?
Unvied ruin! in thy slow decline
From virtuous greatness, what avails that he
Whose prow descended first the Hesperean sea,
And gave our world her mate beyond the brine,
Was nurtured, whilst an infant, at thy knee?
All things must perish—all but things divine.
Flowers, and the stars, and Virtue; these alone,
The self-subsisting shapes, or self-renewing,
Survive. All else are sentenced. Wisest were
That builder who should plan with strictest care
Ere yet the wood was felled or hewn the stone,
The aspect only of his pile in ruin!

VII.

A PICTURE BY ANDREA DEL SARTO, IN THE CATHEDRAL OF PISA.

Are there not virtues which we know not of,
By men unnamed because not met with here,
Perchance too lofty for this lowly sphere,
Our great and glorious heritage above,
Yet here in virtues which we know and love
Dimly foreshown? Thus dimly to the seer,
Rehearsed in humbler kinds that round us move
The sovran attributes of man appear.
Madonna! I have hung day after day
On thy strange beauty with a devout eye;
And now, all marvel, rapture, ecstasy
Rebuked, or harmonised, or worn away,
I gaze; and ask what I have asked; and stay
Lingering, and vainly hoping a reply.

VIII.

THE RENAISSANCE, AND SAVONAROLA.—1.

PAINTER, that on these sacred convent walls
The symbols paintest of the fleeting Hours,
Reserve thine art, poor spoil from Pagan bowers,
To deck withal the rich man's secular halls!
Are these the Hours? aërial Bacchanals
With urn down-bent or basket heaped with flowers,
Through sunshine borne, light Zephyr's paramours?
—Thralls though we be, we are not Pleasure's thralls!
When God with thunder and his prophet's voice
The temples where of old he chose to dwell
Chooses to shake in judgment, cleanse or quell,
How impious sounds thy summons to rejoice!
Erase thy work; kneel on the tombstones bare:
Thine eye with fastings purge: make firm thy hand with prayer.

IX.

THE RENAISSANCE, AND SAVONAROLA.—2.

THEN rise, and paint the Hours; and launch them forth
Like sequent arrows hurled from God's right hand,
Or eagles of the ocean borne to earth
By solid storm their wings no more withstand:
Yet, calm in speed, a stern, predestined band,
In meditative might or gloomy mirth
Speed them, dread forms of elemental birth;
And let one bear the trump, and one the brand.
Fix thou their mighty eyes the dark locks under
Massed o'er their fervid foreheads, like a cloud
Whose heart is flame: and be their faces bowed,
As though they listened to unsleeping thunder;
The breaking of the billows of Time's sea
On the far confines of Eternity.

X.

FRESCOES BY MASACCIO, AT FLORENCE.

WELL hast thou judged that sentence, 'Had ye Faith
Ye could move mountains.' In those forms I see
What God at first created man to be;
His image crowned, triumphant over death.
Born of that Word which never perisheth
Those Prophets here resume the empery
By sin in Eden lost. Their eye, their breath
Cancels disease; lays prone the anarchy
Of Passion's fiercest waves. Secret as Fate,
Like Fate's the powers they wield are infinite:
Their very thoughts are laws: their will is weight:
On as they move in majesty and might
The demons yield their prey, the graves their dead:
And to her centre Earth is conscious of their tread.

XI.

SAINTS BY PIETRO PERUGINO.

GLORY to God of all fair things the maker
For that He dwelleth in the mind of Man!
Glory to Man of that large grace partaker
For that he storeth thus his spirit's span
With shapes our earth creates not, neither can,
Till, like a flood, her vanished youth o'ertake her,
And heaven's 'New Song' to loftier labours wake her,
High artist then, as now poor artisan.
Mark, mark those awful sons of Martyrdom,
With their uplifted hands, but eyes down-cast.
As though the uncreated light had dazed them:—
The error of our brief existence past
They stand like Saints resurgent from the tomb,
Suspended still on that great Voice which raised them!

XII.

PICTURE OF A SAINT.

Dark, infinitely dark, a midnight blue
Those orbs that, resting on the skies, appear
To pierce the veil of Heaven and wander through,
Searching the centre of the starry sphere.
Angels, be sure, unseen are hovering near!
Their fanning plumes with faintest blush imbue
That pearly cheek, a lily else in hue,
And from that brow the auburn tresses clear.
One hand is laid upon her mantled breast
To us an unrevealèd paradise,
Nor bodied in the ascetic Painter's dream:
Hidden it lies in everlasting rest
Beneath those purple robes that earthward stream
Cyphered with star-emblazoned mysteries.

XIII.

A NIGHT ON THE GENOESE RIVIERA.

Fanned by sweet airs the road along the cliff
Wound in the moonlight, glistening now, now dim;
So winds a silver snake in pale relief
Girdling a sacrificial beaker's brim:
Black rocks loomed forth in giant hieroglyph
O'er silken seas: amid their shadows grim
From lowly town dim-lit, or dancing skiff,
At times the song was borne, at times the hymn.
Star after star adown the blue vault sliding
Their bright hair washed successive in the wave,
Till morning, from her far purpureal cave
Issuing, and o'er the foamless billows gliding,
Leaped, as the bells rang out from tower and shrine,
Up from her sea-bath to the hills of pine.

XIV.

BOCCACCIO AND CERTALDO.

THE world's blind pilgrims, tendering praise for blam
Passing Certaldo, point and smile and stare
And with Boccaccio's triumph din the air :—
Ah, but for him how high had soared thy fame,
Italian Song ! False Pleasure is a flame
That brands the Muses' pleasaunce ; burns it bare
As some volcanic isle with barren glare :
O Italy ! exult not in thy shame !
'Twas here, 'twas here thy Song's immortal river
Lost its last sight of hoar Parnassus' head,
And swerved through flowery meads to sandy bar
Its saintly mission here it spurned for ever :
It sighed to Laura, and with Tancred bled :
But caught no second flash from Dante's star !

XV.

THE CAMPO SANTO AT PISA.—1.

THERE needs not choral song, nor organs pealing :
This mighty cloister of itself inspires
Thoughts breathed like hymns from spiritual choi
While shades and lights, in soft succession stealin
Along it creep, now veiling, now revealing
Strange forms, here traced by Painting's earliest sir
Angels with palms ; and purgatorial fires ;
And Saints caught up, and demons round them reeli
Love, long remembering those she could not save,
Here hung the cradle of Italian Art :
Faith rocked it ; hence, like hermit child, went fo
That heaven-born Power which beautified the eart
She perished when the world had lured her heart
From her true friends, Religion and the grave.

XVI.

THE CAMPO SANTO AT PISA.—2.

Lament not thou: the cold winds, as they pass
Through the ribbed fret-work with low sigh or moan,
Lament enough; let them lament alone,
Counting the sere leaves of the innumerous grass
With thin, soft sound like one prolonged—'alas!'
Spread thou thy hands on sun-touched vase, or stone
That yet retains the warmth of sunshine gone,
And drink warm solace from the ponderous mass.
Gaze not around thee. Monumental marbles,
Time-clouded frescoes, mouldering year by year,
Dim cells in which all day the night-bird warbles,
These things are sorrowful elsewhere, not here:
A mightier Power than Art's hath here her shrine:
Stranger! thou tread'st the soil of Palestine!

XVII.

TASSO'S HOUSE AT SORRENTO.

O Leonora, here thy Tasso dwelt,
Secure, ere yet thy beauty he had seen:
Here with bright face and unterrestrial mien
He walked, ere yet thy shadow he had felt:
From that green rock he watched the sunset melt,
On through the waves: yon cavern was his screen
When first those hills, which gird the glowing scene,
Were thronged with heavenly warriors, and he knelt
To hail the vision! Syren baths to him
Were nothing; Pagan grot, or classic fane,
Or glistening pavement seen through billows dim:
Far, far o'er these he gazed on Judah's plain,
And more than manhood wrought was in the boy—
Why did the Stranger meddle in his joy?

XVIII.

CASTELAMARE.

O cool and healthful nights! O peaceful gloom!
O winding sands that in your beauteous zone
Clasp the dim watery plain, how oft alone
I paced your marge, inhaling the perfume
Which forests bursting with invisible bloom
Poured from their mountain ambush! Moon was none
But with such strength the lamp of Venus shone,
Descending nightly over Virgil's tomb,
That, like the moonbeam, her long lustre lay
On distant waves to meet that radiance swelling;
A long bright ladder from the Star of Love
Touched, as it seemed, our lower world. Above,
The nightingale her sorrows wept away;
And all the echoes of her wrong were telling.

XIX.

A MORNING AT SALERNO.

Our hearts heaved slowly as that deep blue flood
Along whose marge we paced. More darkly blue,
Through lines of poplars gleaming on our view,
The violet crescent of the mountains stood:
Unblemished morning, shy as Maidenhood,
Rose blushing from the waves, and round us threw
A gradual halo, reddening through its dew
The silvery greenness of the willow wood—
Small clouds unnumbered swollen with golden glor
Swam in succession long of lucent fleeces
O'er all the ocean-isles and promontories;—
That old-world Faith, which sees whate'er it pleas
Had deemed Saint Agnes up the heavenly Eden
Her mild immaculate flock was gently leading!

XX.

TO NAPLES.

QUEEN of the sunny South, in grace reclined
O'er thy voluptuous bath, and warmed for ever
By beams that make thy nerves in rapture shiver,
From yonder Syren Islands silver-shrined
Smiles, such as strike the loftier vision blind,
Beckoning to thee each morning shoot and quiver:
They sting the languor of thine amorous fever:
And Syren voices swell each passing wind.
But from the other coast, and yet more near,
The Sibyl's whisper, with that music bent,
Creeps slowly o'er the waters. Hear, O hear!
She speaks of buried cities, mountains rent;
Of Pleasure stifled in her mid career,
Fire-lifted isle, and fire-drowned continent!

XXI.

THE SIBYL'S CAVE AT CUMA.

CUMÆAN Sibyl! from thy sultry cave
Thy dark eyes level with the sulph'rous ground
Through the gloom flashing, roll in wrath around!
What see they? Coasts perpetual Earthquakes pave
With ruin; piles half buried in the wave;
Wrecks of old times in later lava drowned;—
And festive crowds, sin-steeped and myrtle-crowned,
Like idiots dancing on a Parent's grave.
And they foresee. Those pallid lips with pain
Suppress their thrilling whispers. Sibyl, spare!
Could Wisdom's voice divide yon sea, and scare
With some Vesuvius new its flaming plane,
Futile the warning! Power despised! forbear
To deepen guilt by counsel breathed in vain!

XXII.

THE RUINS OF CORNELIA'S HOUSE AT BAIA.

I TURN from ruins of imperial power,
Tombs of corrupt delight, old walls the pride
Of statesmen pleased for respite brief to hide
Their laurell'd foreheads in the Muse's bower,
And seek Cornelia's home. At sunset's hour
How oft her eyes, that wept no more, descried
Yon purpling hills! how oft she heard that tide
Fretting as now low cave or hollow tower!
The mother of the Gracchi—Scipio's child—
'Twas virtue such as hers that built her Rome!
Never towards it she gazed! Far off, her home
She made, like her great Father self-exiled.
Woe to the nations when the souls they bare,
Their best and bravest, choose their rest elsewhere

XXIII.

VENICE BY DAY.

THE splendour of the Orient, here of old
Throned with the West upon a waveless sea,
Her various-vested, resonant jubilee
Maintains, though Venice hath her freedom sold:
In their high stalls of azure and of gold
Yet stand, above the servile concourse free,
Those brazen steeds the Car of Victory
Hither from far Byzantium's porch that rolled.
The wingèd Lions, Time's dejected thralls,
Glare with furled plumes. The pictured shapes tha
glow
Like sunset clouds condensed upon the walls
Still boast old wars, or feasts of long ago:
And still the sun his amplest glory pours
On all those swelling domes and ocean floors.

XXIV.

VENICE IN THE EVENING.

ALAS! mid all this pomp of the ancient time,
And flush of modern pleasure, dull Decay
O'er the bright pageant breathes her shadow grey:
As on from bridge to bridge I roam and climb
It seems as though some wonder-working chime,
Whose spell that pageant raised and still can sway,
To some far source were ebbing fast away;
As though, by man unheard, with voice sublime
It bade the sea-born Queen of Cities follow
Her Sire into his ocean realm far down—
Beneath my fleet the courts sound vast and hollow;
And more than Evening's darkness seems to frown
On sable barks that, swift yet trackless, fleet
Like dreams o'er dim lagune and water-street.

XXV.

LEONARDO'S 'LAST SUPPER' AT MILAN.

COME! if thy heart be pure, thy spirits calm,
If thou hast no dark memories, or but those
Pure self-reproach inflicts—ah no, bestows;
Her wounds, here probed, find here their gentlest balm.
O the sweet sadness of that lifted palm!
The dreadful Deed to come His lips disclose:
Yet love and awe, not wrath, that count'nance shows,
As though they sang even now that ritual psalm
Which closed the Feast piacular. Time hath done
His work on this fair picture; but that Face
His outrage awes. Stranger! the mist of years,
Between thee hung and half its heavenly grace,
Hangs there, a fitting veil; nor that alone—
They see it best who see it through their tears!

XXVI.

THE CHURCH OF ST. AMBROSE AT MILAN.

HERE still remains the Apostolic Chair
Whence good Saint Ambrose, patriarchal man,
Thy spiritual sceptre swayed, Milan!
Yonder the Font, divine Augustine, where
The life that never ends for thee began;
And—near as death to life—behold them there!
Those Gates, to him the portals of despair,
Whose closing spake the blood-stained Emperor's ban.
He, the world's master, and her lord, as one
By lightning smitten on his noon-tide throne,
Fell from his pride, and without speech departed:
While thou, dejected Afric's humblest son,
To seats a Mother's tears had made thine own
With regal step didst mount, no longer feeble-hearted.

XXVII.

THE STATUE OF ST. CARLO BORROMEO AT ARONA.

TRUE fame is this;—through love, and love alone,
To stand thus honour'd where we first saw day:
True puissance this; the hand of lawful sway
In love alone to lift, that hand whereon,
Dove-like, Eternal Peace hath fixed her throne,
And whence her blessing wings o'er earth its way;—
True rule to God belongs. Who share it? They
Through whom God's gifts on human kind are strewn.

Bless thus thy natal place, great Priest, for ever!
And thou, Arona, by thy placid bay
Second thy sleepless Shepherd's mute endeavour.
The choice is thine, if that high Grace, like showers
Of sunbeams rain'd on all thy hearths and bowers,
Shall feed thy growth, or quicken thy decay!

XXVIII.

THE MILANESE SCHOOL.

WHAT memory of a being ere his birth
ossessed Luini with the idea strange
f that Sibylline beauty? Hall or grange,
alace or Hut, whate'er we know on earth,
olds nothing like it. Sadness here and mirth
o blend, or so into each other range,
Ve deem them ancient foemen that exchange
ove-vows, and sit henceforth beside one hearth.
hose half-closed eyes with mournful penetration
ook on through all things; yet a furtive smile
Brightens her thin, smooth, shadowy face the while:—
Iethinks that subtle-visaged creature hears
'he narrowing thread of Life in soft gyration
)rawn out; or closing of the Parcæ's shears!

XXIX.

THE CATHEDRAL OF MILAN.

WITH steps subdued, silence, and labour long,
reached the marble roofs: Awe vanquished dread:—
White shone they as the summit of Mont Blanc
When noontide parleys with that mountain's head:
The far-off Alps, by morning tinged with red,
Blushed through the spires that round in myriads
sprung:
A silver gleam the wind-stirred poplars flung
O'er Lombardy's green sea below me spread.
Of these I little saw. In trance I stood,
Ere death, methought, admitted to the skies:
Around me, like a heavenly multitude
Crowning some specular mount of Paradise,
Thronged that Angelic Concourse robed in stone:
The sun, ascending, in their faces shone!

XXX.

BYZANTINE MOSAICS AT RAVENNA.

TRACED on dim gold, in azure vaults enshrined,
Dreary adornments of each glaring space,
Those figures lean lack not a terrible grace!
Like cloud-rack dragged along the wintry wind
Forth stream at large their grey locks unconfined:
A vulture's foot each hand might seem: each face
Reports of wilds where, 'mid the ferine race,
Couched hungry seers and prophets vigil-blind.
Rocks, forests, caves, before me rise austere!
And that strong Church in childhood wandering wide,
By visions nursed, by tempests lullabied:
And hymns of warlike blast I seem to hear;
Victorious hymns no pen of scribe records:—
Fly, scattered Fiends! stand back, terrestrial Lords!

XXXI.

TO A MOUNTAIN IN SWITZERLAND.—1.

FROM all the glittering towers and spires star-bright
That fret thy crystal bastions far below,
With what an awful grace yon dome of snow
Ascends, and, swelling, grows upon our sight,
White as an infant's spirit, or the might
Of grey hairs in a monarch! Soft and slow
Dark clouds across thy Pine-wood vesture flow,
But touch not, mountain king, that sovran height.
The avalanche, borne down in rocky flood,
Thunders unechoed 'mid those seats divine:
And heaven's great diadem of starry globes
Is all thou seest, for thine own white robes
Cancel the world—Never shall foot of mine
Assail the region of thy solitude!

XXXII.

TO A MOUNTAIN IN SWITZERLAND.—2.

Lead to this spot Ambition's outcast son,
With unslaked hopes burning from youth to age;
That snowy vault, its latest crimson flown,
With cold aspect his fever shall assuage:
Lead hither him who, captive in the cage
Of love remembered when the loved is gone,
Feeds on one thought, and that a poisonous one;
Haply that free expanse may disengage
His heart from earth—that region whence there seems
To heaven but one step only. To this spot
Be thou, bewildered maniac, also brought;
Gaze on that calmness, and forget thy dreams,
While noontide slumbers on its breezeless height,
While kissed by rose-lipped Morn, or crowned by starry Night.

XXXIII.

TO A MOUNTAIN IN SWITZERLAND.—3.

The Spirits of the midnight and noonday
On thee, hoar Mount, obsequiously attend;
Within thy skirts shadow and sunlight play;
And the stars hail thee as their earthly friend:
From their immortal charge the Twins descend;
The Plough awhile forgets his heavenly way;
The Pleiads from their shining cloisters stray;
And the crowned Archer doth his bow unbend.
Thy vastness draws the sphere above thee nearer:
—Or is it that our hearts by thee are raised;
And, strengthened thus, delight with vision clearer
To pore on starry wonders unamazed,
Earth's noblest shape forsaking for the sky,
As life when sweetest makes it sweet to die?

XXXIV.

THE CHAPEL OF TELL ON THE LAKE LUCERNE.

On this green platform with its chapel small
Embowered, the centre of the mountain land,
Take, holy Freedom, take for aye thy stand;
And hither from all regions ever call
Thy sons to thy perpetual festival:
Or bid them drink, a sacramental band,
From Grutli's founts, that rose at thy command
There where the three Deliverers vowed the fall
Of Power unjust. Night heard those whispered tones;—
Have they not found large echoes in the world?
Have they not been like God's own thunder hurled
In ruin down on all opprobrious thrones?
All sway that, deifying lawless might,
On that doth build, and not on God and on the right?

XXXV.

THE LAKE OF LUCERNE.

In shape a Cross, and walled with cliffs so high
That o'er each aisle of that quadruple plain
No unfit roof appears the vaulted sky,
It lies, a vast and crystal-paven fane,
A Church, by Nature built, and not in vain
Among the shadowing Mountains; to supply
For all thy sons and suppliants, Liberty,
A shrine of ample girth, and free from stain.
But thou, O Freedom! bid them gaze with fear
And love, upon Tell's birthplace, not on thee!
An awful thing art thou, not less than dear:
Unpurged no eye thy form unveiled should see:
Temples their hearts should be who hope to gain thee—
The sword may win, but Virtue must retain thee!

XXXVI.

How bright, how calm, how gentle, and how great
The soul should grow, ere yet for such a scene,
So sweet, so pure, so lofty, so serene,
It were an equal or an answering mate!
All day upon my heart there hung a weight;
And whence I knew not. Beauty seemed to lean,
Heavy for once, upon a breast, I ween,
Till now to catch her faintest smile elate.
But now the cause of that depression known,
The pain itself has left me; rather say,
In aspiration upward it has flown
From the dark altar of this heart of clay:
And I tread firmly, though by conscience chidden,
A guest permitted—yet a guest unbidden.

XXXVII.

THE MOUNTAIN MUSE.

WHERE shall we spread the couch of thy repose,
For here below thou find'st no worthy dwelling?
Rise then where Alp o'er Alp, like clouds up-swelling,
Above th' attempt of eagle's wing enclose
Inviolate spaces of suspended snows:
There, while the floods far down are faintly knelling,
And hooded Evening, star by star, is telling
Her rosary dim-seen through skies of rose,
There, thy large eyes stedfast and open keeping,
Olympia, rest! what time in mournful choir
The mighty winds, through endless pinewoods sweeping,
Draw from those chords, their melancholy lyre,
Eolian tones of elemental weeping,
And the last gleams of dying day expire.

XXXVIII.

THE BLUE GENTIAN.

With heart not yet half rested from Mont Blanc,
O'er thee, small flower, my wearied eyes I bent,
And rested on that humbler vision long:
Is there less beauty in thy purple tent
Outspread, perchance a boundless firmament,
O'er viewless myriads which beneath thee throng,
Than in that Mount whose sides, with ruin hung,
Frown o'er black glen and gorges thunder-rent?
Is there less mystery? Wisely if we ponder,
Thine is the mightier! Life, dread Power, in thee
Is strong as in cherubic wings that wander
Searching the limits of Infinity,
Life, life to be transmitted, not to expire
Till yonder snowy vault shall melt in the last fire!

XXXIX.

THE MOUNTAIN LANGUAGE.

Silent to watch great rivers at their rise,
And downward track them to the murmuring deep;
The sunlit storm to follow as it flies
Broken through purple glens; in lingering sweep
To hear the forest sigh, the torrent leap;
These things, great Nature's tragic agonies,
What lesson teach they which the soul should prize
As precious, and the memory strive to keep?
'Lift up your hearts!' O strange and mystic words!
Sounds truly eucharistic! Nothing mean
Is heard in them, or common, or unclean.
This is the mountain language. Sense affords
The instrumental medium: but the Spirit
Draws near in faith; and God, that hour, is near it!

XL.

A TYROLESE VILLAGE.

This village, thronged with churches, needeth none:
Each house, like some old missal rich and quaint,
Is blazoned o'er with prophet, seer, and saint:
Each court and street a sanctity hath won:
Here a great Angel stands, crowned with the sun:
Magdalene there pours her perpetual plaint:
There o'er her child the Maiden without taint
Bends—as His mercy bends o'er worlds undone.
Of earth's proud centres none like this recalls
That mystic City in the realms supernal
Built upon God; whose light is God alone:
The very stones cry out: the eloquent walls
Plainly confess that Name the proud disown;
The Father's glory, and the Son Eternal.

TO

THE LORD EMLY

THESE POEMS ARE DEDICATED

BY HIS FRIEND AND KINSMAN

AUBREY DE VERE.

THE AUTUMN OF THE SPRING.

I saw at morn the locks your hands
  Last summer crowned with ill-earned bay,
And marked a silver thread, and looked
    Another way.

Amid the woods to-day I saw
  An unloved sight till then unseen—
A golden bough, a crimson leaf,
    Among leaves green.

When first we roamed those woods, the lark
  Chanted to God her cherub song;
To his fond mate the uxorious thrush
    Sang low, and long.

The wood-dove murmured to herself
  Of restful Truth and Joy love-won:
The cuckoo's note dissolved in heaven,
    Like snow in sun.

And all the birds in lawns rock-girt
  And all the birds in sylvan cells
Blew loud their jewelled flutes and chimed
    Their silver bells.

But ah! to-day upon the bough
I saw the wintry redbreast stand;
Like mourner's ring he seemed on some
New-plighted hand.

His head he tossed, and twittered shrill
As one who cared not what he sung:
The pine-tree's fallen cone I snatched,
And at him flung.

Soothe thou the winter! but thy note
Troubles, not cheers, the autumnal glen:
Off, bird! nor shake the unsteady hearts
Of maids and men!

SONG.

Seek not the tree of silkiest bark
And balmiest bud,
To carve her name—while yet 'tis dark—
Upon the wood.
The world is full of noble tasks,
And wreaths hard-won:
Each work demands strong hearts, strong hands,
Till day is done.

Sing not that violet-veinèd skin
That cheek's pale roses;
The lily of that form wherein
Her soul reposes!

Forth to the fight, true man, true knight!
The clash of arms
Shall more prevail than whispered tale
To win her charms.

The warrior for the True, the Right,
Fights in Love's name:
The love that lures thee from that fight
Lures thee to shame.
That love which lifts the heart, yet leaves
The spirit free,
That love, or none, is fit for one
Man-shaped like thee.

Heart winged once; self-doomed
To pine in bonds the saddest:
Strong spirit, self-entombed
Within the vaults thou madest:
Thy Will it is, thy Will
That holds thee prisoner still!

O Soul, in vain thou strainest
Against thy prison bar;
Of all vain things the vainest
Our poor, half efforts are.
Wholly be free!—till then
Thou dost but hug thy chain.

SONG.

THOUGH oft beguiled, my friend, before,
Still, still permit me to beguile:
Denounce not harshly, but deplore
My laugh, and it may end a smile.
To children more akin than you
We women are—we give them birth—
If we are sometimes childish too,
Be men, nor war on childish mirth!

Once on my head your hand you laid;
I shook it thence;—but 'twas an art
To hide from you how near it weighed
On that which shook beneath—my heart.
Go not! be cold; be stern; be mute;
Yet stay: lest I, who cannot choose
But tremble sometimes at thy suit,
At last should tremble to refuse.

A FAREWELL TO NAPLES.

I.

A GLORIOUS amphitheatre whose girth
Exceeds three-fold th' horizons of the north,
Mixing our pleasures in a goblet wide,
With hard, firm rim through clear air far-descried;
Illumined mountains, on whose heavenly slopes
Quick, busy shades rehearse, while Phœbus drops,
Dramatic parts in scenic mysteries;
Far-shadowing islands, and exulting seas

With cities girt, that catch, till day is done,
Successive glances from the circling sun
And cast a snowy gleam across the blue;
A gulf that, to its lake-like softness true,
Reveres the stillness of the Syren's cell,
Yet knows the ocean's roll, and loves it well;
A gulf where Zephyr oft, with noontide heat
Oppressed, descends to bathe his sacred feet,
And, at the first cold touch at once reviving,
Sinks to the wings in joy, before him driving
A feathery foam into the lemon groves;
Evasive, zone-like sands and secret coves;
Translucent waves that, heaved with motion slow,
On fanes submerged a brighter gleam bestow;
Fair hamlets, streets with odorous myrtles spread,
Bruised by processions grave with soundless tread,
That leave, the Duomo entered, on the mind
A pomp confused, and music on the wind;
Smooth, mounded banks like inland coasts and capes,
That take from seas extinct their sinuous shapes,
And girdle plains whose growths, fire-fed below,
Without the bending labourer burst and blow;
A light Olympian and an air divine—
Naples! if these are blessings, they are thine.

II.

Thy sands we paced in sunlight and soft gloom;
From Tasso's birthplace roamed to Virgil's tomb:
Baia! thy haunts we trod, and glimmering caves
Whose ambushed ardours pant o'er vine-decked waves
Thy cliffs we coasted, loitered in thy creeks,
O shaggy island * with the five great peaks!

* Capri.

Explored thy grotto, scaled that fortress where
Thy dark-eyed maids trip down the rocky stair,
With glance cast backward, laugh of playful scorn,
And cheek carnationed with the lights of morn.
The hills Lactarean lodged us in their breast:
Shadowy Sorrento to her spicy nest
Called us from far with gales embalmed, yet pure;
Her orange brakes we pierced, and ranged her rifts obscure.
Breathless along Pompeii's streets we strayed
By songless fount, mosaic undecayed,
Voluptuous tomb, still forum, painted hall,
Where wreathed Bacchantès float on every wall,
Where Ariadne by the purple deep
Hears not those panting sails, but smiles in sleep,
Where yet Silenus grasps the woodland cup,
And buried Pleasure from its grave looks up:
Lastly, the great Vesuvian steep we clomb;
Then, Naples! made once more with thee our home.
We leave thee now: but first, with just review,
We cast the account, and strike the balance true:
And thus, as forth we fare, we take our last adieu.

III.

From her whom Genius never yet inspired,
Nor virtue raised, nor pulse heroic fired;
From her, who in the grand historic page,
Maintains one barren blank from age to age;
From her, with insect life and insect buzz,
Who, evermore unresting, nothing does;
From her who, with the future and the past
No commerce holds, no structure rears to last;
From streets where spies and jesters, side by side,
Range the rank markets, and their gains divide;

Where Faith in Art, and Art in Sense is lost,
And toys and gewgaws form a nation's boast;
Where Passion, from Affection's bond cut loose,
Revels in orgies of its own abuse;
And Appetite, from Passion's portals thrust,
Creeps on its belly to its grave of dust;
Where Vice her mask disdains, where Fraud is loud,
And naught but Wisdom dumb and Justice cowed;—
Lastly, from her who planted here unawed
'Mid heaven-topped hills, and waters bright and broad,
From these but nerves more swift to err hath gained,
And the dread stamp of sanctities profaned,
And, girt not less with ruin, lives to show
That worse than wasted weal is wasted woe,—
We part, forth issuing through her closing gate
With unreverting faces, not ingrate.

LINES WRITTEN AT HALSTEADS.

Four years ago beside this lake
O'er which the mountain shadows close,
I walked in sadness for the sake
Of one that could no more partake
That grave joy it bestows.

'Since she is gone,' I said, 'ah why
Have they not here her ashes laid?
Here strayed her feet in infancy:
The studious girl was glad to lie
Under yon oak-tree's shade.

'By Old-Church, dear to her, a spot
Once consecrate, twice sanctified,
Beneath its yew she slumbers not,
Nor in the adjoining garden plot,
Nor by the water's side.

'Ah that but once the lark might sing
Above his sister Poet's bed!
For she sang also. Ah that Spring
Her tardy northern flowers might fling
O'er that belovèd head!'

Such thoughts were mine: the mood is gone;
Once more, I stand this lake beside:
Maturer thoughts, and wisdom won
From years that like a dream are flown,
Cheer me instead, yet chide.

As deeply, with a purer heart,
She loved these mountains which I love,
And, loving, left them. Torn apart
From them and from the Poet's art,
She neither wept nor strove.

Amid the stress of daily life
She, for ethereal stillness framed,
Advanced, 'mid scenes for others rife
With petty troubles, care, and strife,
Uncrippled and unmaimed.

The call of Duty was a call
To her more constant and more strong
Than voice of wintry waterfall
Which from the mountain's echoing wall
Increases all night long.

The humblest tasks of day and hour,
If Duty's light around them shone,
Challenged her breast with mightier power
Than Placefell's brow or Yewcrag's bower
Illumed by moon or sun.

We dwell not in the sacred fane,
But seek for strength supernal there,
Elsewhere to use it. Not in vain
Did vales and hills her youth sustain,
For loftier loves prepare.

In crowded street and clamorous mews
Her face its placid candour kept:
Her heart, like flowers refreshed by dews
The mountain's noontide mists diffuse,
In endless sabbath slept.

To all her gentle ways was bound
A grace from woodland memories caught:
Her voice retained that touching sound,
Pathos not plaintive though profound,
Contented rills first taught.

Surely in sleep the torrents poured
For her their requiem; and the wind,
And many a valley wind-explored,
Answering in full harmonic chord,
Their solemn burthen joined.

In dreams unvanquished by the dawn
She saw red dawn the darkness rout,
Gradations saw of mountain lawn,
And ridge behind ridge far withdrawn
In 'linkèd sweetness long drawn out;'

Saw tracts high up of whitening grass,
Sunshine of Earth when Heaven's had failed,
The crimson Birch-grove's feathery mass
By rain drops in a warm, still pass
With silver drapery veiled.

The dark gold of the autumnal gorse,
The auburn of the faded fern,
She saw. Thy murmur, Aira Force!
Kept pure its Arethusan course,
'Mid dirge of billows stern.

If ever now she moves to earth
That eye fast fixed upon the Throne,
In vale or city, south or north,
What sees she? All things nothing worth,
Save virtuous tasks well done.

Then rightly rests in death her head
Where life to her its duties gave:
Among the poor she clothed and fed,
And taught, and loved, and comforted,
Rightly remains her grave.

WRITTEN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CRIMEAN WAR.

From polar wastes and sunless mines,
And prone expanse of snows and sands,
Whereon, while shadowing eve declines,
The solitary Exile stands;

From lost Circassia's branded coasts,
  Danubian deserts black with fire,
From putrid swamps where conscript hosts
  A foe behold not, yet expire;

At last ascending, claim your place,
  Nor fear to answer ban with ban,
And smite the Insulter on his face,
  Ye manlier Faculties of man,

That, long in rising, rise at last;
  And, winged with lightning, thunder-zoned,
The turrets shake, and scare the feast
  Of malefactors crowned and throned.

The blood of Catherine fires the Czar:
  Teach it less proudly to rebel!
False priests baptise an impious war:
  The homicidal synods quell!

From Arctic regions, and the shore
  Medea left of old, make way!
The heart of Poland beats once more:
  The nuns of Minsk await their day!

A WANDERER'S MUSINGS AT ROME.

Thanks be to heaven! yon grove of sombre pines
Whose several tops, like feathers in one wing
Folded o'er one another, hang in air,
From the great City hides me! From its sound,

Low but mysterious, urgent, agitating,
Not distance only, but those rifted walls
Immense (how oft at noontide have I watched
The long green lizard from their fissures glance,
And glide from thicket-mantled tower to tower)
Not less protect me. Thanks once more to Heaven!
This nook in which I lie, this grassy isle
Amid the burnt brake nested, hath no name:
No legend haunts it. Unalarmed I turn,
Confronted by no despot from the grave,
By no inscription challenged. If this spot
Was trod of old by Consul or by King
It is my privilege to be ignorant:
They lived and died. If here the Roman Twins
Tugged at the she-wolf, they have had their day:
Yon lambs have theirs; and I, a wearied man,
Following the path their feet have worn, here find
Their cool recess, and share it. Pretty thrush!
Possess thy soul in peace, and sing at will,
Sharpening thy clear expostulating note,
Or softening, 'mid the branches. Murmuring stream
Sufficient to solicit and reward
An unconstrained attention, thou to me,
A lover of the torrents from my youth
This day art dearer far than Alpine floods
In whose abysmal voices all the sounds
Of all the vales are met and reconciled.
From admiration I desire repose;
Rest from that household foe, a beating heart;
Yea, from all thought exemption, save such thoughts
As, lightly wafted towards us, leave us lightly,
And, like the salutation of those winds
That curl yon ilex leaves, if sweets they bring,
Bequeath a sweeter freshness.

Three weeks since
To me this spot a prison-house had seemed,
And hours here spent ignoblest apathy.
The change, whence comes it? Fevered nights and days
Make answer! Answer thou, mysterious City,
Whose shade eclipsed the world a thousand years,
Till, in thy citizenship world-wide, the name
Of Man at last was lost: make answer, thou!
Tomb, aqueduct, and porch I visited,
And strove with adulating thoughts to clasp,
And could not: for as some vast tree, the sire
Of woods, flings off the span of infant arms,
So by its breadth and compass Rome rebuked
My sympathies. The 'lesser,' verily,
'Is of the greater blessed;' and Love, a gift,
Falls back, repulsed, from that which scorns its aïd,
From that which, solitary in its vastness,
Admits no measurement, nor condescends
To be in portions grasped; from that which yields
No crevice to the climber's hand or foot;
Whose height o'erawes our wingèd aspirations
Like some steep cliff of ocean in whose shade
The circling sea-birds wail. And yet, too slight
With soul-unburdening love to clasp thee, Rome,
Much more was I unable to forget.
I mused in city wastes where pitying Earth
Takes back into her breast huge fragments strewn
Around, like bones of savage beasts extinct:
From wreck to wreck I roamed: my very dreams
Nested in obscure haunts and gloomy vaults:
Ruin on ruin pressed, rivals in death,
Like grave dislodging grave in churchyard choked:
Triumphant Pillar, and vainglorious Arch

Towered in blue sky: voluptuous Baths laid bare
Colossal Vice: and one great [1] Temple meet
For that promiscuous worship Statecraft loves
Lifted its haughty dome and pillared front.
I sought Cornelia's house, but found instead
The Cæsars' Palace, and the Coliseum,
That theatre of blood, where sat enthroned,
Swollen with the rage of Roman merriment,
The Roman People—Earth's chief idol served
With human victims!

From its own excess
Triumphant Evil suffers confutation:
Not here where, tested by the extreme it reached,
The Imperial Instinct stands unmasked—not here
Can the sword's conquests subjugate the soul:
A lucid interval perforce is ours,
By these memorials quelled. The race that here
Trod down their brethren daily, in their day
Might plead some poor excuse. Each war to them
Some singular necessity might urge,
Or final peace impledge: but we who stand
Outfaced by all the congregated trophies
They reared that gloried in their shame, who pace
O'er Tullia's way to reach Domitian's halls,
Who in one choir behold the British Queen
And earlier Sabine maid, who hear at once
The wail of Veii and the falling roofs
Of Carthage, till monotonous becomes
The cry of nations, and the tale of blood
A tedious iteration; we who scan,
Marbled in Rome, the form of injured Earth,
Who round us mark trampled Humanity,

[1] The Pantheon.

And trace her wounds, and count each accurate scar
In that dread victim by Rome's talon and beak
Grav'n and recorded—we are scantly moved
On martial sway to dote. What magic, then,
Draws us to Rome? What spirit bids the world
Send up its tribes to one Metropolis;
To her whom many hate—whom many fear—
Where lies the spell? Luxurious wealth has spread
No velvet o'er the Roman streets, nor hung
The spoils of Cashmeer, Persia, Samarcand,
On either side the way. No flattering dream
Of fame restored, and ancient life renewed,
Looks forth from heaven into a young man's eyes,
Then drops, and plants its tent on Tyber's bank:
The tawny Tyber is no mountain rill
Where Fancy slakes her thirst. The sage shrinks back,
And in the Roman Sibyl's bleeding book
Will read no line—
The future here is mortgaged to the past;
Hope breathes no temporal promise o'er that plain
On which malaria broods: amid the tombs
Her foot moves slowly; and where Hope is lame
The social forces languish.

Whence the spell
That draws us, then, to Rome? In arms, no more
It lives: abides it ambushed then in Art?
The reign of Art is over. To uprear
A prostrate column on its crumbling base—
Behold her chief of triumphs! Art is dead,
Here as in every land. In death gold-robed
Her soul-less body, stretched across the street,
Blocks up the public way. The artist's study,

Of old a hermit's cell, where Mind recluse,
Pillowed on stores aforetime wrung from Thought
By Passion, by Experience drawn from Life,
Saw visions as in Patmos, and set forth
The shapes it saw, is now a wrangling shop
In all the regal cities of the world,
For them that buy and sell. In ancient time
The painter was a preacher, whose sage hand
Changed Thought to Form. If Martyrdom that thought,
The radiant face of confessor unmoved
Expressed full well that death which is a birth
Into the realms of light. If Faith that thought,
Lo! where St. Jerome, eremite and Saint,
A dweller among rocks, himself a rock,
Wasted and gaunt, fast-worn, and vigil-blind,
Dying, draws near in faith, with both hands clasped,
And awe-struck lip, to Him the invisible,
And on that 'Last Communion' hanging, rests
The weight of all his being! If he mused
On Purity, ah! mark that seer (nor young,
Nor female) who a lily holds and reads
Writ in its depth the life white-robed of them
Who follow still the Lamb! How oft, how gladly,
On such fair picture, found in village church
Or loneliest convent, has my spirit fed!
But here in Rome, the centre once of Art,
Here, as elsewhere, her mission Art hath lost:
Her health is here in rank abundance drowned.
The living paint for profit. Pictures old
Are to vainglorious eminence reduced;
And, from the spots that gave them meaning torn,
In proud and blind confusion hang round halls
Where vanity sits umpire. Art of old,

Handmaid of Faith—prophet that witness bare
Of God, not self, nor came in her own name,
Initiate in the Ideal Truth that spans
The actual scope of things, and thence advanced
To be great Nature's meek Interpreter,
Stands now a conquering Queen, and keeps her court
In palace halls whose marble labyrinths
Are cities peopled by a race of stone.
In such what profit? Breathlessly we turn,
And sigh for stillness, sigh for utter peace,
For darkness, or assuasive twilight drawn
In dewy gentleness o'er pastures broad
Whose cool serenity of blue and green
Lures the tense spirit forth, and in a bath
Of relaxation soft soothes and contents it
Too much of ostentatious aid unasked!
Are we so weak within? Can we advance
No step without a crutch? No lessons learn,
Save lessons thrust upon us? Can we find
In Nature's music manifold no voice
But sad confessions of her nothingness?
Trust we in dead things only? Nature lives!
Her moving clouds, the rapture of her waves,
Her rural haunts domestic, nooks sun-warmed
Endeared to babe and greybeard, her expanse
Of fruitful plains, with hamlet, hall, and tower,
Homestead and hedge, in autumn's glistening air
Drawn out at eve, or by the ferment dazed
Of summer sunrise, or on vernal noon
Melting in pearly distance like our dreams
For Man's far welfare—her mysterious glens
That with the substance of one shade are thronged
And others habitant have none, that speak
Of God and God alone, transfix the heart

With wisdom less imposed on man than won
From man's resources. Nature's demonstrations,
Maternal, not scholastic, need have none
Of diagram: her own face is their proof,
Subduing in the pathos of its smiles,
Or power of eye: and, being, infinite,
Her life is all in every part; her lore
In lowliest shape is perfect. Thou frail flower,
Anemone! that near my grassy couch,
By a breath shaken which I scarcely feel,
Thy gracious head as though in worship bowest
Down on thy mother's lap, in thee, in thee
(I seek no further) lives that Power supreme,
Whereof the artists boast. Immaculate Beauty
In thy humility doth dominate,
Is of thy tremblings proud, and, gladly clothed
In thy thin garb of colours and fair forms,
Looks up and smiles. I pluck thee from thy bed—
Lie lightly on a breast that weary grows
Of haughtier burdens! Cool a fevered heart,
That seeking better things hath sought in vain!
Be thou my monitor: let me sum up:
What have I chiefly learned from human life?
That life as brief as thine is to be praised:
That life's best blessings are the flower-like joys
We spurn unseen, chasing inventions vain:
That He who made thee, made the heavens an
earth,
And man; and that in Him is life alone;
To serve Him freedom and to know Him peace—
Thine ancestress that bloomed in Paradise
Possessed no softer voice to celebrate,
Joining the visual chorus of all worlds,
Her great Creator's glory!

Hark that peal!
From countless domes that high in sunlight shake
A thousand bells roll forth their harmonies:
The City, by the noontide flame oppressed,
And sheltered long in sleep, awakes. Even now,
Along the Pincian steep, with youthful step
To dignity subdued, collegiate trains
Precede their dark-stoled Teachers. Courts grass-grown
That echoed long some fountain's lonely splash,
Now ring more loudly, smitten by the wheels
Of prince, or prelate of the Church intent
On some majestic Rite. That peal again!
And now the linked Procession moves abroad,
Untwining slowly its voluminous folds:
It pauses: through the dusky archway drawn
It vanishes: upcoiled at last, and still,
Girdling the Coliseum's central Cross,
The sacred Pageant rests. With motion soft
So slid the Esculapian snake of old
Forth from the darkness. In Hesperian isle
So rested, coiled around the mystic stem,
The Watcher of the fruit. The day draws on:
The multitudinous thrill of quickening life
Vibrates through all the city: it prevails
In convent walks by rustling robe trailed o'er;
Like hum of insects unbeheld it throbs
Through orange-scented, cloistral gardens dim;
It deepens with the concourse onward borne
Between those statued Saints that guard thy bridge,
St. Angelo, and past the Adrian Tomb
Where at the Church's foot an Empire sleeps;
It swells within those Colonnades whose arms
Receive once more the concourse from all lands—

The stately English noble, student pale
From Germany, diplomatist from France,
Far Grecian Patriarch, or Armenian priest,
Or Royal Exile. From thy marble roofs,
St. Peter's, in whose fastnesses abide,
Like Arab tribe encamped, the bands ordained
To guard them from the aggressive elements,
From those aërial roofs to whispering depths
Of crypt where kneels the cowlèd monk alone,
The murmur spreads like one broad wind that lifts,
Ere morn the sighing shrouds of fleet becalmed:
The churches fill; the relics forth are brought:
Screened by rich fretwork the monastic apse
Resounds the hoarse chant like an ocean cave:
And long ere yet those obelisks, which once
Shadowed the Nile, o'er courts Basilican
Project their evening shades, like silver stars
Before white altars glimmering lights shall burn,
And solitary suppliants lift their hands
To Christ, for ever Present, to His Saints,
And to His Martyrs, whom the Catacombs
Hid in their sunless bosoms.

Rome, O Rome!
Surely thy Strength is here! Three hundred years
Thy Faithful lived, and watched among the Tombs;
The Catacombs were their Metropolis:
There in the darkness thirty Pontiffs ruled;
And died, save two, by martyrdom. The Rite,
Dread and tremendous, yoking earth and heaven,
The Christian Sacrifice, was offered there,
A tomb the altar, and, for relics, blood
Of him who last confessed. The pictured walls
To Mary and to Peter witness still.

Here is thy Strength, O Rome! Sun-clad, above,
The Emperor triumphed, and the People triumphed!
The Nubian lion, and the Lybian pard
Roared for their prey! Above thy tawny wave,
Tyber, the world's increase went up each day:
Daily from Rome the Legions passed whose arms
Flashed back in turn the sunrise of all lands:
Through every gate the embassies of Kings
Advanced with gifts. But in the Catacombs
Thy Faithful watched, and, circled by their dead,
Worshipped their God in peace. Three hundred years
Passed like three days: and lo! that Power went forth
Which conquered Death. Then Hell gave up her prey:
That hour the kingdoms of this world became
The kingdoms of the Lord, and of His Christ:
The Prince of this world, from his throne, upreared
On subject thrones of every land, was hurled:
The Pagan victories then their meaning found:
That Empire last and mightiest which absorbed
All its precursors, lay a ruin: God
His family on earth a Kingdom made
And Sion built on buried Babylon!
The Sacrament of Obedience paid to God
Through Man, His Vicar, glorified that hour,
Subjection; and the Apostles reigned at Rome,
Reigned from their tombs, and conquered from their dust!
Behold the mystery of the ages! Man
Wrought it, unconscious! History is mad
Or finds its meaning here. One Mystery vast
Solves here Philosophy's uncounted riddles:

Time with its tumults here is harmonized:
Hope here is found or nowhere!

As a mist
That strives no longer, swept by quiring winds
From some peak'd mountain, my oppression leaves me!
Great Rome is mine at last! Refreshed I rise;
And gales of life from that celestial bourne
Whereto we tend strike on me. With soft shock
Yon almond bower lets falls its rose-touched snow:
The sun is setting. The despotic Day
Which, blessing earth with increase, suffered none
To lift a grateful eye, hath heard his doom,
And round him folds his robes, blood-stained and golden,
With dignity to die. Like haughty hopes
From one reduced by sickness, from the clouds
Their pageantries are passing; and ere long
No hue save that translucent, tender green,
Will speak of pomps gone by. The increasing wind,
Incumbent on the pine-grove's summit broad,
Gathers in volumed strength: within its vaults
An omnipresent and persistent whisper
Waxes in loudness. Well, might I believe
The hosts angelic, who with guardian care,
Urging belike the seasons in their course,
Circle the earth, even now on wings outspread
Were rustling o'er me, countless as sea-sands!
Glorious and blessed Armies! free ye are
From man's uncertainties, and free not less
From man's illusions! Passing in one flight
Calpë and Athens—all that makes renowned
This many-mountained, many-citied globe,

To you our schemes of worldly rule must seem
Like some poor maniac's towers in charcoal sketched,
Airy possession, on his cell's bare wall,
Our science like that knowledge won from touch
By one born blind, our arts like gems minute,
Poor fragments crumbled from your spheres eterne!
Pity us, then, bright Spirits, for ye know
The weakness of our strength; the poverty
Ye know, which we for wealth misdeem—exchanging
The gold of Truth Immutable and One,
Shared, not divided, for the baser coin
Of Truth in portions, scattered through the world.
Ye know the sad vacuity of hearts
With trifles filled, and thence from Him averse
In love for Whom is clasped the love of all things,
And their possession. Starlike in your ken;
By distance, and the barriers of the realms,
And all that haze which men call ancientness,
Unfooled ye are. For you the Church of God
Unwrinkled as the ocean, wears for aye
Her Pentecostal glory. All things that live,
And die not—all Realities divine,
Live in the light of one eternal Now,
And prime perpetual. Him whom we revere
As patriarch, ye behold a white-haired babe,
Poor, heaven-protected infant of fourscore:
His course accomplished, still in him ye note
His mother's new delight—a bud dried up;
Dropt from the human stem at noon; ere night
Blown forth into the darkness. Spirits blest!
The sun that runs before you rises ever:
For ever sets, reigns ever throned at noon;
Past, Present, Future mingle in your sight,
And Time its tortuous stream spreads to a lake

Girt by, and imaging, Eternity,
Between whose mirror and the infinite vault
Ye in the radiance bask!
Bask on, bright Spirits!
Bathe in the beam of Godhead; or fulfil
With awe your ministries of love, in Man
That seeing which they saw not who of old
The Galilean mocked. By death absolved,
By perfected Obedience rendered free,
Man—by the old-world Empires trod to dust,
Man—by the Prince of this world crowned and mocked,
Man o'er the ruins of the world shall rise;
Yea, from the height of heaven, the throne of God,
Shall gaze upon a universe renewed;
His Image o'er that universe shall cast
And o'er your shining hosts; his hand shall raise;
And with the Voice Supreme blending his own,
Shall bless you, and pronounce you 'very good.'

MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS.

I.

Cold, pure, reviving, med'cinable gales,
Sea-born, nor charged with breath of herb or flower,
That far o'er moonlight seas, perhaps this hour,
Trouble some sleeping pilot's whispering sails,
And pour into his ear consoling tales
Of ivy murmuring round a known church tower;
Crystalline airs, in love and pitying power,
Serving that God whose love o'er all prevails;
Hither in mercy also come, and lean
One moment on those lids and o'er this breast!
O cooled by all the shadows of your caves,
O fresh from mountain snows or loneliest waves,
O pure from haunts where man hath never been,
Come with ethereal dews and endless rest!

II.

ON THE DEATH OF A GOOD KING.

Honour that dies not, grief that lives for aye,
And the benedictions of the suffering poor,
Come to thy grave, and there, as at the door
Of Heaven, their brows in mute expectance lay;
A mighty nation stands uncrowned this day:
This day a widowed people's heart is sore;
A sire this day each household doth deplore;
Each head hath lost its helm, each hand its stay.
Great king! a nation smiled upon thy birth;
A nation's prayers, each night, kept watch around thee:
Now thou obey'st the summons of the earth
Behold! a nation's duteous tears have crowned thee:
And millions at thy tomb to thee have given
A portion of their heart to waft with thee to heaven!

III.

ON THE FALL OF A USURPER.

I wished thee length of years! the courtly crowd
Wished it less truly, and less fervently.
Thou livest! How many a head miscrowned hath bowed
In specious death! The slow shaft missed not thee.
Thou livest a posthumous life; reserved to see
The Future's verdict—laughter long and loud:—
Melted thy throne beneath thee like a cloud;
Like snow thy puissance vanished. Mockery
Answered when that usurping hand invoked
Thy host their hundred thousand swords to bare.
Unknown, alone, dethroned because uncloaked,
Thou fleddest; nor friend nor foe demanded where.
Thou livest! A King Batavian William died:—
By which the nations were disedified.

1848.

IV.

POLAND.

Lo, as a prophet, old, and fierce, and gaunt,
Spurning the plains, when some detested foe
His country, and his country's hearths, lays low,
Makes in the mountain walls his caverned haunt;
There lurks; thence leans; half blind, yet vigilant,
Watches red morning tinge the ensanguined snow;
And bends his ear, and says, 'Thy foot is slow,
Deliverer! see thy vengeance be not scant;'—
Not otherwise a trampled Nation waits,
Regioned in fell resolve; her heart thus feeds
On iron; muses thus on coming fates;
Revels in rapture of predestined deeds;
And finds at last the hour, and finds the way:—
Let sceptre-wielding Rebels fear that day!

1848.

V.

TO THE NOBILITY OF ENGLAND, 1848.

Princes of England, undeposed as yet,
While panic-stricken thrones around you quake,
And perplexed kings themselves their sceptres break,
With a firm hand your house in order set:
If sound ye be at heart, external threat
That soundness can but probe to prove. Awake!
Hold fast your birthright for the people's sake:
Let high and low discharge their mutual debt.
Things hollow must collapse; effete decay:
But that which stablished first Nobility—
Valour and Truth—if these abide, her stay,
While live the nations she can never die.
Be true to England: to yourselves be true:
And England shall work out her furthest fates by you.

VI.

ON A CONVENT.

Glorious the thought, not mortal the design,
Defamed by fools, in earthly hearts to raise
Unearthly citadels of prayer and praise;
Revering, to renounce all bonds that twine
With heavenly, earthly love; through Grace divine
To rise o'er Virtue's secondary ways;
Hidden to live with God; and, by His gaze
Illumed yet veiled, like noontide stars to shine!
Glorious the deed each waste and wilderness
And isle beleaguered by the raging main
To thrill with Christian chaunt and psalmic strain,
And make a conquered world her Lord confess!
Ye that conventual pomps denounce, begin
By fixing in your hearts conventual discipline.

VII.

A CONVENT SCHOOL IN A CORRUPT CITY.

Hark how they laugh, those children at their sport!
O'er all this city vast that knows not sleep
Labour and Sin their ceaseless vigil keep:
Yet hither still good Angels make resort.
Innocence here and Mirth a single fort
Maintain: and though in many a snake-like sweep
Corruption round the weedy walls doth creep,
Its track not yet hath slimed this sunny court.
Glory to God, who so the world hath framed
That in all places children more abound
Than they by whom Humanity is shamed!
Children outnumber men: and millions die—
Who knows not this?—in blameless infancy,
Sowing with innocence our sin-stained ground.

VIII.

THE reason why we love thee dost thou ask?
We love for many reasons joined in one:
Because thy face is fair to look upon;
Because, when pains or toils our hearts o'ertask,
In sunny smiles of thine thy love to bask;
Because thou honourest all, and harmest none:
Because thy froward moods so soon are gone:
Thy many faults and foibles wear no mask:—
Because thou art a woman. Unto me
A gracious woman is a child mature;
Docile, and gentle, though with many a lure
Enriched, and, in a soft subjection, free;
A sanguine creature, full of winning ways;
Athirst for love, and shyly pleased with praise.

IX.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.—1.

HAD I been worthy of the love you gave
That love withdrawn had left me sad but strong;
My heart had been as silent as my tongue;
My bed had been unfevered as my grave:
I had not striven for what I could not save:
Back, back to heaven my great hopes I had flung:—
To have much suffered, having done no wrong,
Had seemed to me that noble part the brave
Account it ever. What this hour I am
Affirms the unworthiness that in me lurked:
Some sapping poison through my substance worked,
Some sin not trivial though it lacked a name,
Which ratifies the deed that you have done
With plain approval. Other plea seek none.

X.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.—2.

GIVE me one kiss, sweet love, and so farewell!
Those magic lips, when they were all my own,
To me were dearer than the loftiest throne
That ever made a Conqueror's bosom swell.
Those youthful eyes retain their luminous spell:
Fairer those brows, that droop like flowers o'erblown,
For the dim, dubious shadow o'er them thrown:
Still on that cheek the pure carnations dwell!
—Softly, of infidelity ashamed,
Yet with recovered freedom softly pleased,
She sighed: her hand unwillingly released,
Withdrew, yet something seemed to leave behind:—
She's gone! so fleets the fleeting stream unblamed;
So fleets the unquestioned cloud, the unchallenged wind!

XI.

ON A PORTRAIT.

A DEEP still Sorrow, beautiful and bland,
Across those brooding brows and eastern eyes
Rests, as a broad shade on the mountain lies:
How few that Sorrow's cause shall understand!
Methinks, the years to come, a tragic band,
Move, heard by him, with funeral harmonies,
Up life's dim vale: and prescience, vainly wise,
Shadows a fair face with prophetic hand.
'Tis but a picture:—Stranger, grief-betrayed,
Weep not! The man, not portrait, hadst thou seen,
For early death then justly hadst thou prayed
To shield the mourner with the grave's kind screen
From woes, his portion destined from his birth,—
O noble souls, what do ye here on earth?

XII.

FALSE FRIENDSHIP.

Alas, dear friends, we do each other wrong;
For we long years in love conjoined have been;
Many vicissitudes, and strange, have seen;
Joyed oft, wept oft, outgrown our grief ere long;
Yet what we were, still are we. Love is strong,
Through vigilant hate of all things base and mean,
To raise her votaries, and with fire make clean;
But we her awful aids away have flung,
Over complacent Friendship weakly doted
On virtues, oft through dim tears magnified,
Till Friendship, o'er-indulgent, scarcely noted
The faults hard-by; or, noting, feared to chide;
Therefore dishonoured Friendship asks too late,
'My seat inglorious must I abdicate?'

XIII.

Free born, it is my purpose to die free.
Away, degrading cares; and ye not less,
Delights of sense and gauds of worldliness;
I have no part in you, nor you in me.
They that walk brave wear the world's livery:
Their badge of service is their sumptuous dress:
Seek then your prey in gilded palaces;
Revere my hovel's humble liberty.
Are there no flowers on earth, in heaven no stars,
That we must place in such low things our trust?
Let me have noble toils, if toil I must,
The Patriot's task, or Friendship's sacred cares—
Beside my board that man shall break no crust,
Who sells his birthright for a feast of dust.

XIV.

THE POETRY OF LIFE.

Dian! thy brother of the golden beams
Is hailed for ever as the Lord of Song,
Master of manly verse, and mystic dreams:
Doth, then, no female lyre to thee belong?
Say, is that silver bow whose crescent gleams,
Above black pine-woods lifted, or low-hung
'Twixt hornèd rocks, or troubling midnight streams,
With immelodious cord, and silent, strung?
Ah no, not so! Thou too art musical!
The world is full of poetry unwrit;
Dew-woven nets that virgin hearts enthrall;
Darts of glad thought through infant brains that flit;
Hope and pursuit; loved bonds, and fancies free;—
Poor were our earth of these bereft and thee!

XV.

Painter, in endless fame most sure to live
If thou my Celia's face reveal to men,
Thy heart, all other schools forsaking, give
To him whom Parma boasts her citizen.
All gladdening forms, with exquisitest ken,
Scan thou like him; and sift as with a sieve
From each its dross:—then fix the fugitive,
Painting that Joy which mocks the poet's pen.
The new-born fountain, and the sea-bird's grace,
Be dear to thee. Whole hours, where violets gleam,
Muse thou on eyes as blue, and lids as white:
Where, under chestnut boughs, the moon's pale light
Glimmers o'er banks of primrose, sit and dream
Of those soft lustres on her innocent face!

XVI.

THE happiest lovers that in verse have writ,
After all vows to perfect beauty paid
Full oft their hymns of triumph intermit,
And harp and brow with funeral chaplets shade:
A Babylonian choir on earth they sit
In garb of exiles: sadly they upbraid
Beauty and Joy that only bloom to fade,
And Love and Hope to Death and Ruin knit.
What shall we say? Have poets never loved?
(For small that love which fears that love can die):
Have those that earthly immortality
Award, the name itself a mockery proved?
Or of the Spirit of Life so full are they
That with Death's shadow they are pleased to play?

XVII.

A POET TO A PAINTER.

THAT which my fault has made me, O paint not:
Paint me as that which I desire to be:
The unaccomplished good that died in thought,
That Limbo of high hopes, seek out, set free,
And all I might have been concede to me:
The mask my errors and the world have wrought
Remove: the cloud disperse: erase the blot:
Bid from my brow the temporal darkness flee.
In that celestial and pure fount whereof
Some drops affused my childhood, bathe me wholly;
And shield me from my own deserts: lest they
Who now but see me by the light of love
A sterner insight learn from thee one day;
And love pass from them like some outworn folly.

XVIII.

THE FALL OF BACON.

Apologist for a great man, take heed!
Needs he such aid? Of errors worse is none
Than fond excuses urged for deeds ill-done
By men whose actions mould a nation's creed.
They that in might of mind their race exceed,
And walk this earth like Spirits from the sun,
By them should Virtue's palms not less be won:—
These if they reach not, let the victim bleed!
And who shall dare lament them? All are frail,
Though Nemesis the meaner culprit slights:
Adversity and Justice, hail, O hail!
Sacred the laurelled head your lightning smites!
Him from the prosperous herd ye raise, and down
On crowns of fortune drop a kinglier crown.

XIX.

GRACE DIEU.

When Francis Beaumont wandered in old time
Beside that stream which throws, as then it threw,
A music sweeter than the poet's rhyme
O'er the grey ruins of 'forlorn Grace Dieu,'
How oft, while bat and owl around them flew,
Mourned the great Bard that blood-stained Monarch's crime;
How often yearned to hear that convent chime
Which, century after century, shook the dew
From Charnwood's forest branches eve and dawn!
De Lisle! God's Grace it was thy heart that stirred!
All praise to Him, the Angelus is heard
Once more from hill and woodland, crag and lawn:
And you Cistercian abbey on the height
Once more 'with psalms resoundeth, and the chaunted rite.'

XX.

TO S. C.

'Sleep dwell within thine eyes, peace in thy breast:'
To-night the memory of thy native hills,
To-night the charm of unforgotten rills,
Be kind to fevered nerves and thoughts opprest!
Yet, if the mourners are most surely blest;
If He, who only wounds to heal us, wills
That thou shouldst have thy load of twofold ills,
And, shorn of strength, in vain solicit rest;
Then like a cross thy patient hands put forth,
And gently welcome that which God accords:
And let the sharpest of terrestrial swords
Transfix, unblamed, the meekest heart on earth:
Nor Sleep nor Death repose so perfect gives
As in entire Submission wakes and lives.

XXI.

FROM PETRARCH.

Ah me! how beauteous were those tears of hers
The gathered cloud of Passion, melting, bred
When that deep grief whereon her heart had fed
Rose to her eyes, those tender, starlike spheres!
Wandered adown her delicate face her tears,
Wandered o'er pale cheeks touched with faintest red,
As some clear stream through meads with flowers
o'erspread,
White flowers with sanguine mingled, softly steers.
Love in that rain bewitching stood embowered
Like blithesome bird on which the longed-for rays
Blended with drops of gentlest rain are showered,
And, weeping 'mid his home in those fair eyes,
Shot from the bosom of that sad, sweet haze
Gleams of an ever-brightening Paradise!

XXII.

FROM PETRARCH.

THAT nightingale which wails with such sweet woe
Haply its young ones, haply its dear mate,
Fills the dark heavens and makes the fields overflow
With its wild, broken chaunt disconsolate:
Beside me all night long, where'er I go,
Its dirge upbraids me with my own sad fate,
And chides my blindness which refused to know
That Death divine things too can subjugate.
Ah! easy 'tis to cheat the self-deluded!
Yet who had ever dreamed those sunlike eyes
Setting, should leave the world in darkness shrouded?
But I my pain's high mission recognise:
It means that I should weep and live, and so
Learn that delight abides not here below!

XXIII.

FROM PETRARCH.

THOU Valley filled for ever with my plaint,
River with tears of mine so oft increased,
Fair woodland creatures, wandering bird or beast,
Or, 'twixt your green banks flickering, fishes quaint;
Air by my sighs made warm, and hushed, and faint,
Loved path that, shadowed now, forth issuest,
Hill, happy haunt, to which, now haunt unblest,
Love leads me still, and Custom's dear constraint;
In you full well I trace your features old,
Not in myself, who, of that life bereaven,
Am made a mansion of perpetual woe:
Here I beheld my love; here still behold
The spot from which she passed, disrobed, to Heaven,
Ah, leaving still that beauteous robe below!

XXIV.

IN MEMORY OF SIR WILLIAM R. HAMILTON.—1.

FRIEND of past years, the holy and the blest,
When all my day shone out, a long sunrise;
When aspirations seemed but sympathies,
In such familiar nearness were they dressed;
When Song, with swan-like plumes and starry crest,
O'er-circled earth and beat against the skies,
And fearless Science raised her reverent eyes
From heaven to heaven, that each its God confessed
With homage ever widening! Friend beloved!
From me those days are passed; yet still, O, still,
This night my heart with influx strange they fill
Of beaming memories from my vanished youth:
On thee—the temporal veil by Death removed—
Rests the great Vision of Eternal Truth!

Jan. 10, 1880.

XXV.

AFTER READING AGAIN HIS LETTERS.—2.

AT times I see that ample forehead lit,
Bright as the day-spring round the mounted lark;
At times I see thee stand in musing fit;
At times in woodlands of that twilight park,*
Deciphering well-loved names on beechen bark:
Where Rotha's moonlight ripples past thee flit,
I see thee kiss a grave—then by it sit—†
Her grave that left the land's chief Poet dark.
This day I read thy letters. Word and scene
Recur with strangely mingled joy and ruth;
Thy soul translucent; yet thine insight keen,
Thy heart's deep yearnings and perpetual youth;
Thy courtesy, thy reverence, and thy truth—
All that thou wert, and all thou mightst have been!

* Abbotstown. † That of Wordsworth's daughter.

XXVI.

TRUE AND FALSE LOVE OF FREEDOM. 1860.

THEY that for freedom feel not love but lust,
Irreverent, knowing not her spiritual claim,
And they, the votaries blind of windy fame,
And they who cry "I will because I must,"
They too that launch, screened by her shield august,
A bandit's shaft, revenge or greed their aim,
And they that make her sacred cause their game
From restlessness or spleen or sheer disgust
At duteous days; all these, the brood of night,
Diverse, by one black note detected stand,
Their scorn of every barrier raised by Right
To awe self-will. Howe'er by virtue bann'd,
By reason spurned, that act the moment needs
Licensed they deem; holy whate'er succeeds.

XXVII.

NATIONAL APOSTACY.

TRAMPLING a dark hill, a red sun athwart,
I saw a host that rent their clothes and hair, [glare,
And dashed their spread hands 'gainst that sunset
And cried, 'Go from us, God, since God thou art!
Utterly from our coasts and towns depart,
Court, camp, and senate-hall, and mountain bare;
Our pomp Thou troublest, and our feast dost scare,
And with Thy temples dost confuse our mart!
Depart Thou from our hearing and our seeing:
Depart Thou from the works and ways of men;
Their laws, their thoughts, the inmost of their being:
Black Nightmare, hence! that earth may breathe
again.'
'Can God depart?' I said. A Voice replied,
Close by—'Not so: each Sin at heart is *Deicide*."

XXVIII.

Romans, that lift to Liberty, your God,
Not vows but swords, suppliants self-deified,
Betwixt her altars and your rock of pride
A stream there rolls fiercer than Alpine flood,
A fatal stream of murdered Rossi's blood!
For Liberty he lived: and when he died,
Prisoner, that new Rienzi's corse beside,
The king, the pontiff, and the father stood!
What rite piacular from that impious deed
Hath cleansed your hands? Accuse not adverse stars,
If guilt unwept achieve not virtue's meed.
Years heal not treason. All his sands old Time
Shakes down to keep unblurred those calendars,
Which blazon red their Feasts of prosperous crime.

1860.

TO IRELAND.

AGAINST FALSE FREEDOM.

1860.

I.

The Nations have their parts assigned:
The deaf one watches for the blind:
The blind for him that hears not hears:
Harmonious as the heavenly spheres

Despite their outward fret and jar
Their mutual ministrations are,
Some shine on history's earlier page;
Some prop the world's declining age:
One, one reserves her buried bloom
To flower—perchance on Winter's tomb.

II.

Greece, weak of Will but strong in Thought,
To Rome her arts and science brought:
Rome, strong yet barbarous gained from her
A staff, but, like Saint Christopher,
Knew not for whom his strength to use,
What yoke to bear, what master choose.
His neck the giant bent!—thereon
The Babe of Bethlehem sat! Anon
That staff his prop, that sacred freight
His guide, he waded through the strait,
And entered at a new world's gate.

III.

On that new stage were played once more
The parts in Greece rehearsed before:
Round fame's Olympic stadium vast
The new-born, emulous Nations raced;
Now Spain, now France the headship won,
Unrisen the Russian Macedon:
But naught, O Ireland, like to thee
Hath been! A Sphinx-like mystery,
At the world's feast thou sat'st death-pale;
And blood-stains tinged thy sable veil.

IV.

Apostle, first, of worlds unseen!
For ages, then, deject and mean:
Be sure, sad land, a concord lay
Between thy darkness and thy day!
Thy hand, had temporal gifts been thine,
Had lost, perchance, the things divine.
Truth's witness sole! The insurgent North
Gave way when error's flood went forth:
On the scarred coasts deformed and cleft
Thou, like the Church's Rock, wert left!

V.

That Tudor tyranny which stood
'Mid wrecks of Faith, was quenched in blood
When Charles, its child and victim, lay
The Rebel-Prophet's bleeding prey.
Once more the destined wheel goes round!
Heads royal long are half discrowned:
Ancestral rights decline and die:
Thus Despotism and Anarchy
Alternate each the other chase,
Twin Bacchantes wreathed around one vase.

VI.

The future sleeps in night: but thou
O Island of the branded brow,
Her flatteries scorn who reared by Seine
Fraternity's ensanguined reign,
And for a sceptre twice abhorred
Twice welcomed the Cæsarian sword!

Thy past, thy hopes, are thine alone!
Though crushed around thee and o'erthrown,
The majesty of civil might
The hierarchy of social right
Firm state in thee for ever hold!
Religion was their life and mould.

VII.

The vulgar, dog-like eye can see
Only the ignobler traits in thee;
Quaint follies of a fleeting time;
Dark reliques of the oppressor's crime.
The Seer—what sees he? What the West
Hath seldom save in thee possessed;
The childlike Faith, the Will like fate,
And that Theistic Instinct great
New worlds that summons from the abyss
'The balance to redress of this.'

VIII.

Wait thou the end; and spurn the while
False Freedom's meretricious smile!
Stoop not thy front to anticipate
A triumph certain! Watch and wait!
The schismatic, by birth akin
To Socialist and Jacobin,
Will claim, when shift the scales of power,
His natural place. Be thine that hour
With good his evil to requite;
To save him in his own despite;
And backward scare the brood of night!

THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF;

OR, THE KING'S SACRIFICE.

(Ireland in the Eleventh Century.)

The battle of Clontarf, fought A.D. 1014, annulled for ever the Danish power in Ireland. During two centuries and more the sons of the North had landed on the Irish coasts, sacked the monasteries, burned the cities and churches, and in many places well-nigh destroyed the Christian civilisation of earlier times, although they were never able to establish a monarchy in Ireland. The native dynasties for the most part remained; and Brian the Great, then King of all Ireland, though aged and blind, led forth the native hosts against the invaders for one supreme effort. He placed his son Murrough in command; but he offered up, notwithstanding, his life for his country, and wrought her deliverance. His sons and his grandson partook his glory and his fate. His death was a favourite theme with the chroniclers and bards of ancient Erin.

I.

'Answer, thou that from the height
Look'st to left, and look'st to right,
Answer thou, how goes the fight?'

II.

Thus spake King Brian, by his tent
Kneeling, with sceptred hands that leant
Upon that altar which, where'er
He marched, kept pure his path with prayer.
For after all his triumphs past
That made him wondrous 'mid his peers,
On the blind King God's will had cast
The burden of his fourscore years:

And therefore when that morn, at nine,
He rode along the battle's van,
No sword he lifted, but the Sign
Of Him Who died for man.
King Brian's fleshly strength decayed,
Three times in puissance waxed his spirit,
And tall like oak-trees towered his merit,
And like a praying host he prayed :—
From nine to twelve, with crown on head,
Full fifty prayers the King had said ;
And unto each such power was given,
It shook the unopening gates of heaven.

III.

'O King, the battle goes this hour
As when two seas are met in might,
When billow billow doth devour,
And tide with tide doth fight :

'I watch the waves of war ; but none
Can see what banners rise or fall ;
Sea-clouds on rush, sea-crests on run,
And blood is over all.'

IV.

Then prayed the King once more, head-bare,
And made himself a cross in prayer,
With outstretched arms, and forehead prone
Staid on that topmost altar-stone
Gem-charged, and cleansed from mortal taint,
And strong with bones of many a Saint.

In youth his heart for God had yearned,
And Eire: now thrice his youth returned:
A child full oft, ere woke the bird,
The convent's nocturns he had heard,
In old Kincora, or that isle
Which guards, thus late, its wasted pile,
While winds of night the tall towers shook;
And he would peer into that Book
Which lay, lamp-lit, on eagle's wings,
Wherein God's Saints in gold and blue
Stood up, and Prophets stood, and Kings;
And he the Martyrs knew,
And maids, and confessors each one,
And—tabernacled there in light—
That blissful Virgin enough bright
To light a burnt-out sun.
The blazoned Letters well he kenned
That stood like gateways keeping ward,
Before the Feast-Days set, to guard
Long ways of wisdom without end:
He knew the music notes black-barred,
And music notes, like planted spears,
Whereon who bends a fixed regard
The gathering anthem hears,
Like wakening storms 'mid pines that lean
Ere sunrise o'er some dusk ravine.—
The thoughts that nursed his youth, that hour
Were with his age, and armed with power.

V.

So fifty Psalms he sang, and then
Rolled round his sightless eyes again,
And spake; 'Thou watcher on the height,
Make answer quick, how goes the fight?'

VI.

'O King, the battle goes as when
The mill-wheel circles round and round:
The battle reels; and bones of men
Beneath its wheel are ground:

'The war-field lies like Tomar's wood
By axes marred, or charred with fire,
When, black o'er wood-ways ruin-strewed,
Rises the last oak spire.'

VII.

Then to his altar by the tent
Once more King Brian turned, and bent
Unsceptred hands and head discrowned
Down from that altar to the ground,
In such sort that the cold March air
With fir-cones swept his snow-white hair;
And prayed, 'O Thou that from the skies
Dost see what is, and what must be,
Make mine and me Thy Sacrifice,
But set this People free!'

VIII.

That hour, he knew, in many a fane
Late ravaged by the Pagan Dane,
God's priests were offering, far and wide,
The Mass of the Presanctified:
For lo! it was Good Friday morn,
And Christ once more was crowned with thorn:
God's Church, he knew, from niche and shrine
Had swept those gauds that time consumes,

Whate'er sea-cave, or wood, or mine
Yield from their sunless wombs:
Veiled were the sacred images,
He knew, like vapour-shrouded trees,
Vanished gold lamp, and chalice rare;
The astonished altars stripped and bare,
Because upon the cross, stone-dead,
Christ lay that hour disraimented.

IX.

He prayed—then spake—'How goes the fight?'
Then answer reached him from the height:

X.

'O King, the battle goes as though
God weighed two nations in His scale;
And now the fates of Eire sink low,
Now theirs that wear the mail:

'O King, thy sons, through God's decree,
Are dead save one, the best of all,
Murrough—and now, ah woe is me!
I see his standard fall!'

XI.

It fell: but as it fell, above
Through lightning-lighted skies on drove
A thousand heavenly standards, dyed
In martyrdom's ensanguined tide;
And every tower, and town, and fane
That blazed of old round Erin's shore,
Down crashed, it seemed, in heaven again;
So dire that thunder's roar!

The wrath had come: the Danes gave way;
For Brian's prayer had power that day;
Seaward they rushed, the race abhorred;
The sword of prayer had quelled their sword.
So fled they to the ship-thronged coast;
But, random-borne through Tolga's glade,
A remnant from that routed host
Rushed by where Brian prayed;
And, swinging forth his brand, down leap'd
Black Brodar, he that foremost rode,
And from the kingly shoulders swept
The old head, praising God;
And cried aloud, 'Let all men tell
That Brodar, he that leagues with Hell,
That Brodar of the magic mail
Slew Brian of the Gael.'

XII.

Him God destroyed! The Accursed One lay
Like beast, unburied where he fell:
But Brian and his sons this day
In Armagh Church sleep well.
And Brian's grandson strong and fair,
Clutching a Sea-King by the hair,
Went with him far through Tolga's wave;
Went with him to the same sea-grave.
So Eire gave thanks to God, though sad,
And took the blessing and the bale,
And sang, in funeral garments clad,
The vengeance of the Gael.
Silent all night the Northmen haled
Their dead adown the bleeding wharf:
Far north at dawn the Pirates sailed;
But on thy shore, Clontarf,

Old Eire once more, with wan cheeks wet,
Gave thanks that He who shakes the skies
Had burst His people's bond, and yet
Decreed that Sacrifice:
For God is One that gives and takes;
That lifts the low, and fells the proud;
That loves His land of Eire, and makes
His rainbow in His cloud.

Thus sang to Eire her Bard of old;
Thus sang to trampled kerne and serf,
While, sunset-like, her age of gold
Came back to green Clontarf.

THE BARD ETHELL.

(Ireland in the Thirteenth Century.)

I.

I am Ethell, the son of Conn;
Here I bide at the foot of the hill;
I am clansman to Brian and servant to none;
Whom I hated I hate: whom I loved love still.
Blind am I. On milk I live,
And meat, God sends it, on each Saint's Day,
Though Donald Mac Art—may he never thrive—
Last Shrovetide drove half my kine away!

II.

At the brown hill's base, by the pale blue lake,
I dwell, and see the things I saw;
The heron flap heavily up from the brake,
The crow fly homeward with twig or straw,

The wild duck, a silver line in wake,
Cutting the calm mere to far Bunaw.
And the things that I heard though deaf I hear;
From the tower in the island the feastful cheer;
The horn from the wood; the plunge of the stag,
With the loud hounds after him, down from the crag.
Sweet is the chase, but the battle is sweeter;
More healthful, more joyous, for true men meeter!

III.

My hand is weak! it once was strong:
My heart burns still with its ancient fire:
If any man smites me he does me wrong,
For I was the Bard of Brian Mac Guire.
If any man slay me—not unaware,
By no chance blow, nor in wine and revel,
I have stored beforehand a curse in my prayer
For his kith and kindred: his deed is evil.

IV.

There never was King, and there never will be,
In battle or banquet like Malachi!
The Seers his reign had predicted long;
He honoured the Bards, and gave gold for song.
If rebels arose he put out their eyes;
If robbers plundered or burned the fanes
He hung them in chaplets, like rosaries,
That others, beholding, might take more pains:
There was none to women more reverent-minded,
(For he held his mother, and Mary, dear);
If any man wronged them that man he blinded
Or straight amerced him of hand or ear.
There was none who founded more convents—none
In his palace the old and poor were fed;

The orphan walked, and the widow's son,
Without groom or page to his throne or bed.
In council he mused, with great brows divine,
And eyes like the eyes of the musing kine,
Upholding a Sceptre o'er which, men said,
Seven Spirits of Wisdom like fire-tongues played.
He drained ten lakes and he built ten bridges;
He bought a gold book for a thousand cows;
He slew ten Princes who brake their pledges;
With the bribed and the base he scorned to carouse.
He was sweet and awful; through all his reign
God gave great harvests to vale and plain;
From his nurse's milk he was kind and brave:
And when he went down to his well-wept grave
Through the triumph of penance his soul uprose
To God and the Saints. Not so his foes!

V.

The King that came after! ah woe, woe, woe!
He doubted his friend and he trusted his foe.
He bought and he sold: his kingdom old
He pledged and pawned to avenge a spite:
No Bard or prophet his birth foretold:
He was guarded and warded both day and night:
He counselled with fools and had boors at his feast;
He was cruel to Christian and kind to beast:
Men smiled when they talked of him far o'er the wave:
Paid were the mourners that wept at his grave!
God plagued for his sake his people sore:—
They sinned; for the people should watch and pray
That their prayers, like angels at window and door,
May keep from the King the bad thought away!

VI.

The sun has risen: on lip and brow
He greets me—I feel it—with golden wand:
Ah, bright-faced Norna! I see thee now;
Where first I saw thee I see thee stand!
From the trellis the girl looked down on me:
Her maidens stood near: it was late in spring:
The grey priests laughed as she cried in glee,
'Good Bard, a song in my honour sing!'
I sang her praise in a loud-voiced hymn
To God who had fashioned her, face and limb,
For the praise of the clan and the land's behoof:
So she flung me a flower from the trellis roof.
Ere long I saw her the hill descending—
O'er the lake the May morning rose moist an
slow:
She prayed me, her smile with the sweet voice blend
ing,
To teach her all that a woman should know.
Panting she stood: she was out of breath:
The wave of her little breast was shaking:
From eyes still childish and dark as death
Came womanhood's dawn through a dew-clou
breaking.
Norna was never long time the same:
By a spirit so strong was her slight form moulde
The curves swelled out from the flower-like frame
In joy; in grief to a bud she folded:
As she listened her eyes grew bright and large
Like springs rain-fed that dilate their marge.

VII.

So I taught her the hymn of Patrick the Apostle,
And the marvels of Bridget and Columkille:

Ere long she sang like the lark or the throstle,
Sang the deeds of the servants of God's high Will:
I told her of Brendan who found afar
Another world 'neath the western star;
Of our three great bishops in Lindisfarne isle;
Of St. Fursey the wondrous, Fiacre without guile;
Of Sedulius, hymn-maker when hymns were rare;
Of Scotus the subtle who clove a hair
Into sixty parts, and had marge to spare.
To her brother I spake of Oisin and Fionn,
And they wept at the death of great Oisin's son.*
I taught the heart of the boy to revel
In tales of old greatness that never tire,
And the virgin's, up-springing from earth's low level,
To wed with heaven like the altar fire.
I taught her all that a woman should know:
And that none might teach her worse lore I gave her
A dagger keen, and I taught her the blow
That subdues the knave to discreet behaviour.
A sand-stone there on my knee she set,
And sharpen'd its point—I can see her yet—
I held back her hair and she sharpened the edge
While the wind piped low through the reeds and sedge.

VIII.

She died in the convent on Ina's height:—
I saw her the day that she took the veil:
As slender she stood as the Paschal light,
As tall and slender and bright and pale!
I saw her; and dropped as dead: bereaven
Is earth when her holy ones leave her for heaven:

* Ossian's son, Oscar.

Her brother fell in the fight at Beigh :
May they plead for me, both, on my dying day !

IX.

All praise to the man who brought us the Faith !
'Tis a staff by day and our pillow in death !
All praise, I say, to that blessed youth
Who heard in a dream from Tyrawley's strand
That wail, 'Put forth o'er the sea thy hand ;
In the dark we die : give us hope and Truth ! '
But Patrick built not on Iorras' shore
That convent where now the Franciscans dwell :
Columba was mighty in prayer and war ;
But the young monk preaches as loud as his bell
That love must rule all and all wrongs be forgiven,
Or else, he is sure, we shall reach not heaven !
This doctrine I count right cruel and hard :
And when I am laid in the old churchyard
The habit of Francis I will not wear ;
Nor wear I his cord, or his cloth of hair
In secret. Men dwindle : till psalm and prayer
Had soften'd the land no Dane dwelt there !

X.

I forgive old Cathbar who sank my boat :
Must I pardon Feargal who slew my son ;
Or the pirate, Strongbow, who burn'd Granote,
They tell me, and in it nine priests, a nun,
And—worst—Saint Finian's old crosier staff ?
At forgiveness like that I spit and laugh !
My chief, in his wine-cups, forgave twelve men ;
And of these a dozen rebelled again !
There never was chief more brave than he !
The night he was born Loch Gur up-burst :

He was bard-loving, gift-making, loud of glee,
The last to fly, to advance the first.
He was like the top spray upon Uladh's oak,
He was like the tap-root of Argial's pine:
He was secret and sudden: as lightning his stroke:
There was none that could fathom his hid design!
He slept not: if any man scorned his alliance
He struck the first blow for a frank defiance
With that look in his face, half night half light,
Like the lake gust-blackened yet ridged with white!
There were comely wonders before he died:
The eagle barked, and the Banshee cried;
The witch-elm wept with a blighted bud:
The spray of the torrent was red with blood:
The chief, returned from the mountain's bound,
Forgat to ask after Bran, his hound.
We knew he would die: three days were o'er;—
He died. We *waked* him for three days more.
One by one, upon brow and breast
The whole clan kiss'd him. In peace may he rest!

XI.

I sang his dirge. I could sing that time
Four thousand staves of ancestral rhyme:
To-day I can scarcely sing the half:
Of old I was corn and now I am chaff!
My song to-day is a breeze that shakes
Feebly the down on the cygnet's breast:
'Twas then a billow the beach that rakes,
Or a storm that buffets the mountain's crest.
Whatever I bit with a venomed song
Grew sick, were it beast, or tree, or man:
The wronged one sued me to right his wrong
With the flail of the Satire and fierce Ode's fan.

I sang to the chieftains: each stock I traced
Lest lines should grow tangled through fraud or haste.
To princes I sang in a loftier tone,
Of Moran the Just who refused a throne;
Of Moran whose torque would close, and choke
The wry-necked witness that falsely spoke.
I taught them how to win love and hate,
Not love from all; and to shun debate.
To maids in the bower I sang of love:
And of war at the feastings in bawn or grove.

XII.

Great is our Order; but greater far
Were its pomp and power in the days of old,
When the five Chief Bards in peace or war
Had thirty bards each in his train enrolled;
When Ollave Fodhla in Tara's hall
Fed bards and kings: when the boy, king Nial,
Was trained by Torna: when Britain and Gaul
Sent crowns of laurel to Dallan Forgial.
To-day we can launch the clans into fight:
That day we could freeze them in mid career!
Whatever man knows, was our realm by right:
The lore without music no Gael would hear.
Old Cormac, the brave blind king, was bard
Ere fame rose yet of O'Daly and Ward.
The son of Milesius was bard—'Go back,
My People,' he sang; 'ye have done a wrong!
Nine waves go back o'er the green sea track;
Let your foes their castles and coasts make strong.
To the island ye came by stealth and at night:
She is ours if we win her in all men's sight!

For that first song's sake let our bards hold fast
To Truth and Justice from first to last!
'Tis over! some think we erred through pride,
Though Columba the vengeance turned aside.
Too strong we were not: too rich we were:
Give wealth to knaves:—'tis the true man's snare!

XIII.

But now men lie: they are just no more:
They forsake the old ways: they quest for new:
They pry and they snuff after strange false lore
As dogs hunt vermin! It never was true:—
I have scorned it for twenty years—this babble'
That eastward and southward a Saxon rabble
Have won great battles, and rule large lands,
And plight with daughters of ours their hands!
We know the bold Norman o'erset their throne
Long since! Our lands! Let them guard their own!

XIV.

How long He leaves me—the great God—here!
Have I sinned some sin, or has God forgotten?
This year I think is my hundredth year:
I am like a bad apple, unripe yet rotten!
They shall lift me ere long, they shall lay me—the clan—
By the strength of men on mount Cruachan!
God has much to think of! How much He hath seen
And how much is gone by that once hath been!
On sandy hills where the rabbits burrow
Are Raths of Kings men name not now:
On mountain tops I have tracked the furrow
And found in forests the buried plough.

For one now living the strong land then
Gave kindly food and raiment to ten.
No doubt they waxed proud and their God defied;
So their harvest He blighted or burned their hoard:
Or He sent them plague, or He sent the sword:
Or He sent them lightning; and so they died
Like Dathi, the king, on the dark Alp's side.

XV.

Ah me that man who is made of dust
Should have pride toward God! 'Tis a demon's spleen!
I have often feared lest God, the All-just,
Should bend from heaven and sweep earth clean,
Should sweep us all into corners and holes,
Like dust of the house-floor, both bodies and souls!
I have often fear'd He would send some wind
In wrath; and the nation wake up stone-blind.
In age or in youth we have all wrought ill:
I say not our great king Nial did well,
Although he was Lord of the Pledges Nine,
When, besides subduing this land of Eire,
He raised in Armorica banner and sign,
And wasted the British coast with fire.
Perhaps in his mercy the Lord will say,
'These men! God's help! 'Twas a rough boy play!'
He is certain—that young Franciscan Priest—
God sees great sin where men see least:
Yet this were to give unto God the eye,
Unmeet the thought, of the humming fly!
I trust there are small things He scorns to see
In the lowly who cry to Him piteously.

Our hope is Christ. I have wept full oft
He came not to Eire in Oisin's time;
Though love, and those new monks, would make men soft
If they were not hardened by war and rhyme.
I have done my part: my end draws nigh:
I shall leave old Eire with a smile and sigh:
She will miss not me as I missed my son:
Yet for her, and her praise, were my best deeds done.
Man's deeds! man's deeds! they are shades that fleet,
Or ripples like those that break at my feet:
The deeds of my chief and the deeds of my King
Grow hazy, far seen, like the hills in spring.
Nothing is great save the death on the Cross!
But Pilate and Herod I hate, and know
Had Fionn lived then he had laid them low
Though the world thereby had sustained great loss.
My blindness and deafness and aching back
With meekness I bear for that suffering's sake;
And the Lent-fast for Mary's sake I love,
And the honour of Him, the Man above!
My songs are all over now:—so best!
They are laid in the heavenly Singer's breast
Who never sings but a star is born:
May we hear His song in the endless morn!
I give glory to God for our battles won
By wood or river, on bay or creek;
For Norna—who died; for my father, Conn:
For feasts, and the chase on the mountains bleak:
I bewail my sins, both unknown and known,
And of those I have injured forgiveness seek.

The men that were wicked to me and mine,
(Not quenching a wrong, nor in war nor wine)
I forgive and absolve them all, save three :—
May Christ in His mercy be kind to me !

THE SISTERS; OR, WEAL IN WOE.

(Ireland in the Nineteenth Century.)

Dedicated to my friend and kinsman,
Stephen E. Spring Rice,

June 2, 1861.

[This tale, written in happier times, was intended to illustrate that nobler side of Irish life and character which is too often ignored, and which remains the hope of Ireland's true friends in her darkest days.]

January, 1884.

From nine to twelve my guest was eloquent
In anger, mixed with sorrow, at the things
He saw around us; lands half marsh, half weeds,
Gates from the gate-posts miserably divorced,
Hovels ill-thatched, wild fences, fissured roads—
'Your people never for the future plan;
They live but for the moment.' Thus he spake,
A youth just entering on his broad domains,
A senator in prorogation time
Travelling for knowledge, Oxford's accurate scholar,
A perfect rider, clean in all his ways,
But by traditions narrowed. As the moon
Turns but one side to earth, so showed that world
Whereon he gazed, for stubborn was his will,
And Ireland he had never loved. 'You err,'

I answered, taking in good part his wrath,
'Our peasant too has prescience; far he sees;
Earth is his foreground only, rough or smooth
In him from seriousness the lightness comes:
Too serious is he to make sacrifice
For fleeting good; the battles of this world
He with the left hand fights, and half in sport;
He has his moment—and eternity.'
'Ay, ay,' exclaimed my guest, 'your Church, she does it!
Your feasts and fasts and wakes and social rites,
With "Sir," and "Ma'am," and usages of Court:—
I've seen a hundred men leave plough and spade
To take a three weeks' infant to its grave,
A cripple pay two shillings for a cart
To bear him to the Holy Well. Sick Land!
Look up! the proof is round you written large!
Your Faith is in the balance wanting found:
Your shipless seas confess it; bridgeless streams;
Your wasted wealth of ore, and moor, and bay!
Beneath the Upas shade of Faith depraved
All things lie dead—wealth, comfort, freedom, power—
All that great Nations boast!' 'Such things,' I answered,
'The Gentiles seek; and you new tests have found;
"Ecclesiæ stantis vel cadentis," friend;—
"Blessed the rich: blessed whom all men praise:"
New Scriptures, these; the Irish keep the old!
Say, are there not diversities of gifts?
Are there not virtues—Industry is one—
Which reap on earth, whilst others sow for heaven?
Faith, hope, and love, and purity, and patience,
Humility, and self-forgetfulness,

These too are virtues; yet they rear not States.
What then? Of many Nations earth is made:
Each hath its function; each its part for others:
If all were hand, where then were ear or eye?
If all were foot, where head? You rail, my friend,
Not at my country only but your own.
The land that gave us birth our service claims,
The suffering land our love. Yet England, too,
They love, and they the most, who flatter not.
A thousand years of nobleness she lived
Whereof you rob her! In this isle are men
By ancient lineage hers. Such men might say,
"My England was entombed ere yours had birth."
Dates she from Arkwright only? Rose the Nation
With Alfred, or those Tudor Kings who built
The Golden Gate of England's modern time,
But built it upon liberties annulled,
Old glories quenched, the old nobles dead or quelled—
Ay, wrecks more sad?' His host, I could not use
Words rough as his albeit to shield a land
For every shaft a targe; so changed the theme
To her he knew—thence loved.

He loved his country;
An older man than he for things less great
Had loved that land. Yet who could gaze, unmoved,
From Windsor's terraced heights o'er those broad meads
Lit by the pomp of silver-winding Thames
Dropping past templed grove, and hall, and farm,
Toward the great City? Who, unthrilled, could mark
Her Minsters, towering far away, with heads
That stay the sunset of old times; or them,
Oxford and Cambridge, England's anchors twain,

That to her moorings hold her? Fresh from these
Who, who could tread, O Wye, thy watery vale
Where Tintern reigns in ruin; who could rest
Where Bolton finds in Wharf a warbling choir,
Or where the sea-wind fans thy brow discrown'd,
Furness, nor love and wonder? Who untouch'd,
When evening creeps from Scawfell toward Black Combe,
Could wander by thy darkly gleaming lakes
Embayed 'mid sylvan garniture and isles
From saint or anchoret named, within the embrace
Of rural mountains green, or sound, scent, touch,
Of kine-besprinkled, soft, partitioned vales,
Almost domestic? Shadow-haunted land!
By Southey's lake Saint Herbert holds his own!
The knightly armour now by Yew-dale's crag
Rings loud no longer: Grasmere's reddening glass
Reflects no more the on-rushing clan: yet still
Thy Saxon Kings, and ever-virgin Queens
Possess thee with a quiet pathos; still,
Like tarnished path forlorn of moon that sets
Over wide-watered moor and marsh, thy Past
A spiritual sceptre, though deposed, extends
From sea to sea—from century-worn St. Bees
To Cuthbert's tomb under those eastern towers
On Durham's bowery steep!

He loved his country:
That love I honoured. Great and strong he called her:
But well I knew that had her greatness waned,
His loved had waxed.

As thus we talk'd the sun
Launched through the hurrying clouds a rainy beam
That smote the hills. My guest exclaimed, 'Come forth:

We waste the day! Yon ridge my fancy takes;
Climb we its crest!' The wolf-hound at our feet,
Our drift divining, bounded sudden on us
In rapture of prospective gratitude.

We passed the offending gate; a plank for bridge,
We passed the offending stream which dashed its spray
Contemptuous on us, proud of liberty.
I laughed; 'Our passionate Ireland is the stream;
Seven hundred years at will it mocks or chides;
You have not made it turn your English mill!'
We scaled the hills; we pushed through miles of trees
Which, sire and son, had held their own since first
The tall elk trod their ways. Lightning and storm
Had left large wrecks: election wars, not less,
Or hospitalities as fierce, when home
A thousand chiefless clansmen dragged the bride,
Or danced around a cradle,—ah, brave hearts!
Loyal where cause for loyalty was scant!
Vast were those woods and fair; rock, oak, and yew.
Grey, green, and black, in varying measures striking
That three-stringed lyre which charms not ear but eye.
Long climbing, from the woodland we emerged
And paced a rocky neck of pale green pasture,
The limit of two counties. Full in face
Rushed, ocean-scented, the harmonic wind:
Round us the sheep-bells chimed; a shower late past
With jewelry had hung the blackberry bush,
And gorse-brake half in gold. On either side
Thin-skinned, ascetic, slippery, the descent
Down slanted toward the creeping mists. Our goal

We reached at last—a broad and rocky mass
Forth leaning, lordly, unto lands remote,
The lion's head of all those feebler hills
That cowering slunk behind it. Far around
Low down, subjected, stretched the sea-like waste
Shade-swept, unbounded, like infinity.
An hour before his time the sun had dropped
Behind a mountain-wall of barrier cloud
Wide as the world: but five great beams converged
Toward the invisible seat of his eclipse;
And over many a river, bay, and mere
Lay the dull red of ante-dated eve.

That summit was a churchyard. Cross-engraven
Thronged the close tomb-stones. Each one prayed for peace;
And some were raised by men whose heads were white
Ere selfless toil had won the hoarded coins
That honoured thus a parent. In the midst
A tomb-like chapel, thirty feet by ten,
Stood monumental, with stone roof and walls
The wrestling centuries slid from. Nigh we sat
While, by the polished angle split, the wind
Hissed like a forkèd serpent. Silent long
My friend remain'd; his sallies all had ceased,
A man of tender nerve though stubborn thought.
The scene weighed on him like a Prophet's scroll
Troubling some unjust City. Far and near
He scanned the desolate region, and at last
Prayed me the hieroglyphic to expound.
'Yon tower which blurs the lonely lake far off,
What is it?' And I answered, 'Know you not?
He built it, he that Norman horsed and mailed,

Who, strong in Henry's might and Adrian's bull,
Rent from the Gaelic monarch half his realm;—
The rest came later, dowry of the bride.'

Once more he mused; then, westward pointing, spake:
'Yon lovely hills, yet low, with Phidian line,
That melt into the horizon:—on their curve
A ruined castle stands; the sky glares through it,
Red, like a conflagration?' I replied:
'Four hundred years the Norman held his own:
He spake the people's language; they in turn
His war-cry had resounded far and wide;
Their history he had grown, impersonate.
The land rejoiced in him, and of his greatness
Uplifted, glorying, on a neck high held
The beautiful burden, as the wild stag lifts
O'er rocky Torc his antlers! Would you more?
The Desmond was unloved beside the Thames;
The right of the great Palatine was trampled;
His Faith by law proscribed. O'er tombs defaced,
In old Askeaton's Abbey, of his sires
He vowed unwilling war. Long years the realm
Reel'd like a drunken man. Behold the end!
Yon wreck speaks all!'

Thus question after question
Dragged, maimed and mangled, dragged reluctant forth
Time's dread confession! Crime replied to crime:
Whom Tudor planted Cromwell rooted out;
For Charles they fought;—to fight for Kings, their spoilers,
The rebel named rebellion! William next!

Once more the Nobles were down hurled; once more
Nobility as in commission placed
By God among the lowly. Loyalty
To native Princes, or to Norman chiefs
Their lawless conquerors, or to British Kings,
Or her the Mother Church that ne'er betrayed,
Had met the same reward. The legend spake
Words few but plain, grim rubric traced in blood;
While, like a Fury fleeting through the air,
History from all the octaves of her lyre
Struck but one note! What rifted tower and keep
Witnessed of tyrannous and relentless wars,
That shipless gulfs, that bridgeless streams and moors,
Black as if lightning-scarred, or curst of God,
Proclaimed of laws blacker than brand or blight—
Those Penal Laws. The tale was none of mine;
Stone railed at stone; grey ruins dumbly frowned
Defiance, and the ruin-handled blast
Scattered the fragments of Cassandra's curse
From the far mountains to the tombs close by,
Which muttered treason.

That sad scene to me
Had lost by use its pathos as the scent
Which thrills us while we pass the garden palls
On one within it tarrying. To my friend
It spake its natural language: and as he
Who, hard through habit, reads with voice unmoved
A ballad that once touched him, if perchance
Some listener weeps, partakes that listener's trouble
Even so the stranger's sorrow struck on mine,
And I believed the things which I beheld,
There sitting silent. When at last he spake

The spirit of the man in part was changed;
The things but heard of he had seen: the truths
Coldly conceded now he realized:
Justice at last with terrible recoil
Leap'd up full-armed, a strong man after sleep,
And dashed itself against the wrong! I answered:
'Once more you speak the words you spake this morn,
"Look up, the proof is round you, written large:"
But in an altered sense.'

I spake, and left him:
Left him to seek a tomb which three long years
Holds one I honoured. Half an hour went by;
Then he rejoined me. With a knitted brow,
And clear vindictiveness of speech, like him
Who, loving, hates the sin of whom he loves,
He spake against the men who, having won
By right or wrong the mastery of this isle
(For in our annals he was versed, nor ran
In custom's blinkers save on modern roads),
Could make of it, seven hundred years gone by,
No more than this! Then I: 'No country loved they:
Her least, the imperial realm! 'Tis late to mourn;
Let past be past.' 'The Past,' he said, 'is present;
And o'er the Future stretches far a hand
Shadowy and minatory.' 'Come what may,'
I said, 'no suffering can to us be new;
No shadow fail to dew some soul with grace.
The history of a Soul holds in it more
Than doth a Nation's! In its every chance
Eternity lies hid; from every step
Branch forth two paths piercing infinity.
These things look noblest from their spiritual side:

A statesman, on the secular side you see them,
And doubt a future based on such a past.
'Tis true, with wrong dies not the effect of wrong,
Or sense thereof: 'tis true stern Power with time
Changes its modes, not instinct: true it is
That hollow peace is war that wears a mask:
Yet let us quell to-day unquiet thoughts:
She rests who lies in yonder tomb: sore pains
She suffered: yet within her there was peace:
In God's high Will she rests, and why not we?'

Thus we conversed till twilight, thickening, crept
Compassionate, o'er a scene to which we said
Twilight seemed native, day a garish vest
Worn by a slave. Returning, oft my friend
Cast loose in wrath the arch-rebel Truth; I answered:
'She rests, and why not we? O suffering land!
Thee, too, God shields; and only for this cause
Can they that love thee sleep.'—
Holy were all as she, the wrongs long past
Would rack our age no longer: for that cause
The blinder they who mock her country's Faith.
Thousands are like her! Ireland's undergrowths—
Her hope is there, and not in cloud or sunshine
That beat her mountain-tops. The maiden's tale
He sought with instance. 'Twas not marvellous,
I told him: yet to calm his thoughts perturbed,
Thus, while the broad moon o'er the lonely moor
Rose, blanching as she soared, till pools, at first
With trembling light o'erlaid, gave back her face,
And all the woodland waves as eve advanced
Shone bright o'er sombre hollows, I recounted
The fragments of a noteless Irish life,

Not strange esteemed among us. Such a theme
I sought not. Ill it were to forge for friend
A providence, or snare him though to Truth.
Yet I was pleased he sought that tale. 'Twas sad
But in its dusky glass—and this I hid not—
Shadowed a phantom image of my country,
Vanquished yet victor, in her weal and woe.

The father in the prime of manhood died;
The mother followed soon; their children twain,
Margaret Mac Carthy, and her sister Mary,
The eldest scarcely ten years old, survived
To spread cold hands upon a close-sealed grave,
And cry to those who answered not. The man
Who, in that narrow spot to them the world,
Stood up and seemed as God; that gentler one
Who overhung like Heaven their earliest thought,
And in the bosom of whose sleepless love
Reborn they seemed each morning, both were dead.
In grief's bewilderment the orphans stood
Like one by fraud betrayed: nor moon, nor sun,
Nor trees, nor grass, nor herds, nor hills appeared
To them what they had been. In saddened eyes,
Frightened yet dull, in voice subdued, and feet
That moved as though they feared to wake the dead,
Men saw that nowhere loneliness more lives
Than in the breasts of children. Time went by;
The farm was lost; and to her own small home
Their father's mother led them. 'Twas not far;
They could behold the orchard they had loved;
Behind the hedge could hear the robin sing,
And the bees murmur. Slowly, as the trance
Of grief dissolved, the present lived once more;
The past became a dream!

I see them still!
Softly the beauty-making years on went,
And each one as he passed our planet's verge
Looked back, and left a gift. A darker shade
Dropped on the deepening hair; a brighter gleam
Forth flashed from sea-blue eyes with darkness fringed.
Like, each to each, their stature growing kept
Unchanged gradation. To her grandmother
A quick eye and a serviceable hand
Endeared the elder most; she kept the house;
Hers was the rosier cheek, the livelier mind,
The smile of readier cheer. In Mary lived
A visionary and pathetic grace
Through all her form diffused, from those small feet
Up to that beauteous-shaped and netted head,
Which from the slender shoulders and slight bust
Rose like a queen's. Alone, not solitary,
Full often half an autumn day she sat
On the high grass-banks, foot with foot enclasped,
Now twisting osiers, watching cloud-shades now,
Or rushing vapours through whose chasms there shone
Far off an alien race of clouds like Alps
O'er Courmayeur white-gleaming, and like them
To stillness frozen. Well that orphan knew them,
Those marvellous clouds that roof our Irish wastes;
Spring's lightsome veil outblown, sad Autumn's bier,
And Winter's pillar of electric light
Slanted from heaven. A spirit-world, so seemed it,
In them was imaged forth to her.
With us
The childish heart betroths itself full oft
In vehement friendship. Mary's was of these;
And thus her fancy found that counterweight

Which kept her feet on earth. With her there walked
Two years a little maiden of the place,
Her comrade, as men called her. Eve by eve
Homeward from school we saw them as they passed,
One arm of each about the other's neck,
Above both heads a single cloak. She died,
To Mary leaving what she valued most,
A rosary strung with beads from Olivet.
Daily did Mary count those beads; from each
The picture of some Christian Truth ascending,
Till all the radiant Mysteries shone on high
Like constellations, and man's gloomy life
For her to music rolled on poles of love
Through realms of glory. Hope makes Love immortal!
That friend she ne'er forgot. In later years
Working with other maidens equal-aged,
(A lady of the land instructed them,)
In circle on the grass, not them she saw,
Heard not the song they sang: alone she sat,
And heard 'mid sighing pines and murmuring streams
The voice of the departed.
Smoothly flowed
Till Margaret had attained her eighteenth year
The tenor of their lives; and they became,
Those sisters twain, a name in all the vale
For beauty, kindness, truth, for modest grace,
And all that makes that fairest flower of all
Earth bears, heaven fosters—peasant nobleness:—
For industry the elder. Mary failed
In this, a dreamer; indolence her fault,
And self-indulgence, not that coarser sort
Which seeks delight, but that which shuns annoy.

And yet she did her best. The dull red morn
Shone, beamless, through the wintry hedge while passed
That pair with panniers, or, on whitest brows
The balanced milk-pails. Margaret ruled serene
A wire-fenced empire smiling through soft glooms,
The pure, health-breathing dairy. Softer hand
Than Mary's ne'er let loose the wool; no eye
Finer pursued the on-flowing line: her wheel
Murmured complacent joy like kitten pleased:
With us such days abide not.
Sudden fell
Famine, the Terror never absent long,
Upon our land. It shrank—the daily dole;
The oatmeal trickled from a tighter grasp;
Hunger grew wild through panic; infant cries
Maddened at times the gentle into wrong:
Death's gentleness more oft for death made way;
And like a lamb that openeth not its mouth
The sacrificial People, fillet-bound,
Stood up to die. Amid inviolate herds
Not few the sacraments of death received,
Then waited God's decree. These things are known:
Strangers have witness'd to them; strangers writ
The epitaph again and yet again:
The nettles and the weeds by the way-side
Men ate: from sharpening features and sunk eyes
Hunger glared forth, a wolf more lean each hour;
Children seemed pigmies shrivelled to sudden age;
And the deserted babe too weak to wail
But shook if hands, pitying or curious, raised
The rag across him thrown. In England alms
From many a private hearth were largely sent,
As ofttimes they have been. 'Twas vain. The land

Wept while her sons sank back into her graves
Like drowners 'mid still seas. Who could escaped:
And on a ghost-thronged deck, amid such cries
As from the battle-field ascend at night
When stumbling widows grope o'er heaps of slain,
Amid such cries stood Mary, when the ship
Its cable slipped and, on the populous quays
Grating, without a wind, on the slow tide,
Dropped downward to the main.
For western shores
Those emigrants were bound. At Liverpool,
Fann'd by the ocean breeze the smouldering fire
Of fever burst into a sudden flame;
The stricken there were left; among them Mary.
How long she knew not in an hospital,
A Babel of confused distress, she lay,
Dinned with delirious strife. But o'er her brow
God shook the dew of dreams wherein she trod
The shadowed wood-walks of old days once more,
And dabbled in old streams. Ere long, still weak,
Abroad she roamed, a basket on her arm,
With violets heaped. The watchman of the city
Laid his strong hand upon her drooping head
Banning the impostor. 'Twas her rags, she thought,
Incensed him, and in meekness moved she on.
When one with lubrique smile toyed with her flowers,
And spake of violet eyes and easier life,
She understood not, but misliked, and passed.
In Liverpool an aged priest she found,
A kinsman of her mother's. Much to her
Of emigrants he spake, and of their trials,
Old ties annull'd, and 'mid temptations strange
Lacking full oft the Bread of Life. She wept;
Before the tabernacle's lamp she prayed

Freshly-absolved and heavenliest, with a prayer
That showered God's blessing o'er the wanderers down:
But dead was her desire to cross the main.
Her strength restored, beyond the city-bound
With others of her nation she abode,
Amid the gardens labouring. A rough clan
Those outcasts seemed: not like their race at home:
Nor chapel theirs, nor school. Their strength was prized;
Themselves were so esteemed as that sad tribe
Beside the Babylonian streams that wept,
By those that loved not Sion.
Weeks grew months;
And, with the strength to suffer, sorrow came.
Hard by their nomad camp a youth there lived
Of wealthier sort, who looked upon this maid:
Her country was his own: he loved it not:
Had rooted quickly in the stranger's land;
And versatile, cordial, specious, seeming-frank,
Contracting for himself a separate peace,
Had prosper'd, but had prospered in such sort
As they that starve within. Her confidence
He gained. To love unworthy, still he loved her:
Loved with the love of an unloving heart,
That love which either is in shallows lost,
Or in its black depth breeds the poison weed.
She knew him not; how could she? He himself
Knew scantly. Near her what was best within him
Her golden smile sunned forth; but, dark and cold,
Like a benighted hemisphere abode
A moiety of his being which she saw not.
His was a superficial nature, vain,
And hard, to good impressions sensitive,

And most admiring virtues least his own;
A mirror that took in a seeming world,
And yet remained blank surface. He was crafty,
Followed the plough with diplomatic heart;
His acts were still like the knight's move at chess,
Each a surprise; not less, to nature's self
Who heard him still referr'd them. 'What!' men said,
'Marry the portionless!' Strange are fortune's freaks!
The wedding-day was fixed, the ring brought home,
When from a distant uncle tidings came:
His latest son was dead. 'Take thou my farm,
And share my house'—So spake the stern old man—
'And wed the wife whom I for thee have found.'
He showed the maid that letter. Slowly the weeds
Made way adown the thick and stifled stream,
And others followed; slowly sailed the cloud
Through the dull sky, and others followed slowly:
At last he spake. Low were his words and thin,
Many, but scarcely heard. He asked—her counsel!
Her cheek one moment burned. Death-cold, once more
A little while she sat; then rose and said;
'You would be free; I free you; go in peace.'
'Twas the good angel in his heart that loved her;
'Twas not the man himself! He wept, but went.
The woman of the house that night was sure
The girl had loved him not. She thought not so
When, four months past, she mark'd her mouth, aside,
Tremble, his name but uttered.
Sharp the wrong!
Yet they on Life's bewildered book would force
A partial gloss it bears not who assume

The injured wholly free from blame. The world
Is not a board in squares of black and white,
Or else the judgment-executing tongue
Would lack probation. Wronged men are not angels;
Wrong's chiefest sin is this—it genders wrong;
So stands the offender in his own esteem
Exculpate; while the feebly-judging starve
The just cause, babbling 'mutual was the offence!'
The man was weak; not wholly vile. 'Twas well,
Doubtless, to free him; yet in after years,
When early blight had struck his radiant head,
The girl bewailed the pride that left thus tempted
The man she loved; arraigned the wrath that left him
Almost without farewell. His letter too,
Unopen'd she returned. 'Twas strange! so sweet—
Not less there lived within her, down, far down,
A fire-spring seldom wakened! When a child,
At times, by some strange jealousy disturbed
From her still dream she flashed in passion quelled
Ere from her staider sister's large blue eyes
The astonishment had passed. Such moods remained
Though rare—that wrath of tender hearts, which scorns
Revenge, which scarcely utters its complaint,
And yet forgives but slowly.

In those days
Within the maiden's bosom there arose
Sea-longings, and desire to sail away
She knew not whither; and her arms she spread,
Weeping, to winds and waves, and shores unknown,
Lighted by other skies; and inly thus
She reasoned self-deceived. 'What keeps thee here?
'Twas for a farther bourne thou bad'st farewell
To those at home, and here thou art as one

That hangs between two callings.' In her heart
Tempests low-toned to ocean-tempests yearned,
And ever when she marked the shipmast forest
That on the smoky river swayed far off,
Her wish became a craving. Soon once more
Alone 'mid hundreds on a rain-washed deck
She stood, and saw the billows heave around
And all the passions of that headlong world.
Dark-visaged ocean frowned with hoary brows
Against dark skies; huge, lumbering water-weights
Went shouldering through the abysses: streaming clouds
Ran on the lower levels of the wind;
And in the universe of things she seemed
An atom random blown. Full many a morn
Rose red through mists, like babe that weeps to rise;
Full many an evening died from wave to wave;
Then gradual peace possessed her. Love may wound
But 'tis self-love that wound exasperates;
A noble nature casts out bitterness,
And o'er the scar, like pine-tree incorrupt,
Weeps healing gums. Heart-whole she gazed at last,
On the great city chiefest of that realm
Which wears the Future's glory. Landed, soon
Back to old duties with a mightier zest
Her heart, its weakening sadness passed, returned
Kindness made service easier, and the tasks
At first distasteful smiled on her ere long.
There she was loved once more; there all went well;
And there in peace she might have lived and died;
Yet in that region she abode not long:
In part a wayward instinct drave her forth;
In part a will that from the accomplished end
Unstable swerved; in part a hope forlorn:

She sought a site, their sojourn who had left
Long since her village. There old names, old voices,
Faces unknown, yet recognized, thronged round her
In unconsummate union, (hearts still like,
Yet all beside so different,) not like Souls
Re-met in heaven—more like those Shades antique
That, 'mid the empurpled fields, of other airs
Mindful, in silence trod the lordly land,
Or flocked around the latest guest of Death
With question sad of home. Imperfect ties
Rub severance into soreness. Mary passed,
Thus urged, ere long to lonelier climes: she tracked
Companioned sometimes, sometimes without friend,
The boundless prairie, sailed the sea-like lake,
Descended the broad river as it rushed
Through immemorial forests: lastly stood
Sole, 'mid that city by the southern sea.
There sickness fell upon her: there her hand
Dropt, heavier daily, on her task half done;
Her feet wore chains unseen. The end, she thought,
Was coming. Ofttimes, in her happier days,
She wished to die and be with God: yet now,
Wearied by many griefs, to life she clung,
Upbraiding things foregone and inly sighing
'None loves to die.' Sorrow, earth-born, in some
Breeds first the Earth-infection; in them works,
Like those pomegranate seeds that barred from light
For aye sad Ceres' child! Alas! how many,
The ill-honoured ecstasies of youth surceased,
Exchange its clear spring for the mire! Hope sick,
How oft Faith dies! How few are they in whom
Virgin but yields to Vestal; casual pureness
Merged in essential; childhood's matin dew
Fixed, ere exhaled, in the Soul's adamant!

Mary with these had part; to her help came—
That help the proud despise. One eve it chanced
Upon the vast and dusking quays she stood
Alone and weeping. She that morn had sent
Her latest hoardings to her grandmother,
And half was sorry she had naught retained:
The warm rain wet her hair: she heard within
The silver ringing of its drops commingling
With that still mere beside her childhood's home,
And with the tawny sedge that girt it round,
And with its winter dogwood far away
Reddening the faint, still gleam. As thus she stood
Upon her shoulder sank a hand. She turned:
It was a noble lady clothed in black,
And veiled. That veil thrown back, she recognized
At once the luminous stillness and the calm
Ethereal which the sacred cloister breeds.
A voice as pure and sweet as if from heaven,
Toned as friend speaks to friend, addressed her thus:
'You lack a home: our convent is hard by.'
The lady, Spanish half, and Irish half,
No answer sought, but with compulsion soft
Drew her, magnetic, as the tree hard by
Draws the poor creeper on the ground diffused,
And lifts it into light. The child's cold hand
Lurked soon in hers: and in that home which seemed
An isle of heaven the meek lay-sister lived,
Ere long by healthier airs to strength restored,
A rapturous life of Christian freedom masked
In what but servitude had been to one
Lacking vocation true. The Life Divine,
'Hidden with God,' is hidden from the world
Lest Virtue should be dimmed by Virtue's praise.

Heroic Virtue least by men is prized:
The hero in the saint the crowd can honour,
The saint at best forgive. To this world's ken
Convents, of sanctity chief citadels,
Though sanctity in every place is found,
The snowy banners and bright oriflambs
Of that resplendent realm by Counsels ruled,
Not Precept only, spread in vain, despised,
Or for their earthly good alone revered,
Not for their claims celestial. Different far
The lesson Mary learned. The poor were fed,
The orphan nursed; around the sick man's couch
Gentle as light hovered the healing hand;
And beautiful seemed, on mountain-tops of truth,
The foot that brought good tidings! Times of trial
Were changed to Sabbaths; and the rude, rough girl,
Waiting another service, found a home
Where that which years had marred returned once more
Like infant flesh clothing the leprous limb.
Yet these things Mary found were blossoms only:
The tree's deep root was secret. From the Vow
Which bound the Will's infinitude to God,
Upwelled that peaceful strength whose fount was God:
From Him behind His sacramental veil
In holy passion for long hours adored
Came that great Love which made the bonds of earth
Needless, thence irksome. Wondering, there she learned
The creature was not for the creature made
But for the sole Creator; that His kingdom,
Glorious hereafter, lies around us here,
Its visible splendour painfully suppressing,

And waiting its transfigurance. Was it strange,
If while those Brides of Christ around her moved
Her heart sang hymns to God? Much had she suffered:
Much of her suffering gladly there she learned
Came of her fault; and much had kindliest ends
Not yet in her fulfilled. A light o'ershone her
Which slays Illusion, that white snake which slimes
The labyrinth of self-love's more tender ways
Virtue's most specious mimic. She was loosed:
The actual by the seeming thraldom slain;
Her life was from within and from above;
And as, when Winter dies, and Spring new-born'
Her whisper breathes o'er earth, the earlier flowers,
Unlike the wine-dark growths of Autumn, dipped
In the year's sunset, rise in lightest hues,
An astral gleam, white, green, or delicate yellow
More light than colour, so the maiden's thoughts
Flashed with a radiance that permitted scarce
Human affections tragic. Oft, she told me,
As faithless to old friends she blamed herself:—
One hand touched Calvary, one the Eternal Gates;
The present nothing seemed. The years passed on:
The honeymoon of this heart-bridal waned;
But nothing of its spousal truth was lost,
Nor of its serious joy. If failures came—
And much she marvelled at her slow advance,
And for the first time, pierced by that stern grace
Wherein no sin looks trivial, feared;—what then?
Failures that deepened humbleness but sank
Foundations deeper for a loftier pile
Of solid virtue: transports homeward summoned
For more disinterested love made way,
More perfect made Obedience.

If a Soul,
Half-way to heaven, death past, once more to earth
Were sent, it could but feel as Mary felt
When on the convent grates a letter smote
Loud, harsh, with summons from the outward world.
Her sister, such its tidings, was a wife,
(That matron whom you praised:—ay, comely is she,
And good; laborious, kindly, faithful, true;
Yet Time has done Time's work, her spiritual beauty
Transposing gently to a lower key;)
Her grandmother bereft, and weak through age,
Needed her tendance sorely. Would she come?
Alas! what could she? Duty stretched from far
An iron hand that stayed her mounting steps;
The little novices wept loud, 'Abide!'
Long on her neck the saintly sisterhood
Hung ere they blessed her: then she turned and went.

And so once more she trod this rocky vale,
And scarcely older looked at twenty-six
Than at sixteen. Before so gentle, now
A humbler gentleness was o'er her thrown;
Nor ruffled was she ever as of yore
With gusts of flying spleen: nor feared she now
Hindrance unlovely, or the word that jarred.
The sadness hers at first dispers'd ere long,
And such strange sweetness came to her, men said
A mad dog would not bite her. Lowliest toils
Were by her hand ennobled: Labour's staff
Beneath it burst in blossom. In the garden,
'Mid earliest birds, and singing like a bird,
She moved, her grandmother asleep. She mixed
The reverence due to years with tenderness
The infant's claim. 'Twas hers to bring the crutch,

Nor mark the lameness; hers with question apt
To prompt, not task, the memory. Tales twice-told
Wearied not her, nor orders each with each
At odds, nor causeless blame. Wiles she had many
To anticipate harsh moods, lest one rash word
Might draw a cloud 'twixt helpless eld and heaven,
Blotting the Eternal Vision felt not seen
By hearts in grace. With works of gay caprice,
Needless—yet prized—she made the spectre Want
Seem farther off. Thus love in narrow space
Built a great world. The grandmother preferred
To her, that dreamful girl of old, the woman
Who from the mystic precinct first had learned
Humanity, yet seemed a human creature
O'erruled by some angelic guest. At heart
Ever a nun, she ministered with looks
That healed the sick. The newly-widowed door
Its gloom remitted when she passed; stern foes
Downtrod their legend of old wrongs. To her
Sacred were those that grieved;—those tearless yet
Sacred scarce less because they smiled, nor knew
The ambushed fate before them. When a child,
Grey-haired companionship or solitude
Had pleased her more than childish mates; but now
All the long eves of summer in the porch
The children of her sister and the neighbours,
A spotless flock, sat round her. From her smiles
The sluggish mind caught light, the timid heart
Courage and strength. Unconscious thus, each day
Her soft and blithesome feet one letter traced
In God's great Book above. So passed her life;—
Sorrow had o'er it hung a gentle cloud;
But, like an autumn-mocking day in Spring,

Dewy and dim yet ending in pure gold,
The sweets were sweeter for the rain, the growth
Stronger for shadow.
You have seen her tomb!
Upon the young and beautiful it closed:
Her grandmother yet lingers! What is Time?
Shut out the sun, and all the summer long
The fruit-tree stands as barren as the rock;
May's offering March can bring us. Of the twain
The younger doubtless in the eyes of God
Had inly lived the longest. She had learned
From action much, from suffering more, far more,
For stern Experience is a sword whose point
Makes way for Truth. Her trials, great and little,
And trials ever keep proportion just
With high vocations and the spirit's growth,
Had done their work till all her inner being
Freed from asperities, in the light of God
Shone like the feet of some old crucifix
Kissed into smoothness. Here I fain would end,
Leaving her harboured; but her stern, kind fates
Not thus forewent her. Like her life her death,
Not negative or neutral; great in pains,
In consolations greater. Many a week
Much ailed her; what the cause remained in doubt;
When certainty had come she trembled not:
Fixed was her heart. Those pangs that shook her frame,
Like tempests roaring round a mountain church,
Shook not that peace within her! She was thankful;
'More pain if such Thy Will, and patience more,'
This was her prayer; or wiping from moist eyes
The trembling tear, she whispered, 'Give me, Lord,

On earth Thy cleansing fire that I may see
Sooner Thy Face, death past!'
Alleviations,
Many and great, God granted her. Once more
Her sister was her sister! Unlike fortunes
Had placed at angles those two lives that once
Lay side by side; and love that could not die
Had seemed to sleep. It woke: and, as from mist,
Once more shone out their childhood! Laughed and flashed
Once more the garden-beds whose bright accost
Had cheered them for their parents mourning. Tears
Remembered stayed the course of later tears;
The prosperous from the unprosperous sister sought
Heart-peace; nor wealth nor care could part them more;
And sometimes Margaret's children seemed to her
As children of another! Greetings sweet
Cheered her from distant regions. Once it chanced
The nuns a relic sent her ne'er before
Seen in our vales, a fragment of that Cross
Whereon the world's Redeemer hung three hours:—
The neighbours entering knelt and wept, and smote
Their breasts; her hands she raised in prayer; and straight
Such Love, such Reverence in her heart there rose
Her anguish, like a fiend exorcised, fled;
And for an hour at peace she lay as one
Imparadised. A solace too was hers
Known but to babes. Her body, not her mind,
Was racked; the pang to come she little feared,
Nor lengthened out morose the pang foregone;
Once o'er, to sleep she sank in thankful prayer.

A week ere Mary died all suffering left her;
And from the realms of glory beams, as though
Further restraint they brooked not, fell on her
Yet militant below, as there she lay
In monumental whiteness, spirit-lit.
The anthems of her convent charmed once more
Her dreams; and scents from woods where she had sat
In tears. Then spake she of her wandering days;—
Herself she scarcely seemed to see in them;
Plainly thus much I saw: When all went well,
Danger stood nigh; but soon as sorrow came
Within that darkness nearer by her side
Walked her good Angel. In that latest week
Some treasures hidden ever near her heart
She showed me: faded flowers; her mother's hair;
Gold pieces that have raised our chapel's Cross;
A riband by her youthful comrade worn:—
Upon its cover some few words I found
There traced when first beyond the western main
She heard the homeless cuckoo's cry well-known:
'When will my People to their land return?'
From the first hour her grandchild sank, once more
She that for years bed-ridden lay had risen,
And, autumn past, put forth a wintry strength,
Ministering. Her frame was stronger than her mind;
O'er that at times a dimness hung, like cloud
That creeps from pine to pine. Inly she missed
Her wonted place of homage lost; she mused
Sadly upon the solitary future;
But in her there abode a rock-like will,
And from her tearless service night or day
No man might push her. Seldom spake the woman:

She called her grandchild by her daughter's name,
Her daughter buried thirty years and more,
And once she said in wrath, 'Why toil they thus?
Nora is dead.' She laboured till the end:
It came—that mortal close! 'Twas Christmas Eve;
Far, far away were heard the city bells:
The sufferer slept. At midnight I went forth;
Along the ice-filmed road a dull gleam lay,
And a sepulchral wind in woods far off
Sang dirges deep. Upon her crutches bent
The aged woman stood beside the door,
With that long gaze intense which is an act
Silently looking toward that hill of graves
We trod to-day; a sinking moon shone o'er it:
Then whispered she—the light of buried years
Edging once more her eyes—'Each Saturday,
Of those that in that churchyard sleep three Souls,
Their penance done, ascend, and are with God.'
Thus as she spake a cry was heard within,
And many voices raised the Litany
For a departing Soul. Long time—too long—
Had seemed that dying! Now the hour was come,
And change ineffable announced that Death
At last was standing on the floor. O hour!
When in brief space our life is lived again!
Down cast the latest stake! when fiends ascend,
Beckoning the phantoms of forgotten sins
Conscience to scare, or launching as from slings
Temptations new; while Angels hold before us
The Cross unshaken as the sun in heaven,
And whisper, 'Christ.' O hour! when prayer is all;
And they that clasp the hand are thrown apart
By the world's breadth from that they love! The act

Sin's dread bequest that makes an end of sinning,
Long lasted, while the heart-strings snapt, and all
The elements of the wondrous sensuous world
Slid from the fading sense, and those poor fingers,
As the loose precipice of life down crumbled,
Plucked as at roots. Storm-winged the hours rushed by;
There lay she like some bark on midnight seas,
Now toiling through the windless vale, anon
Hurled on and up to meet the implacable blast
Upon the rolling ridge, when not a foot
Can tread the decks, and all the sobbing planks
Tremble o'erspent. The morning dawned at last
Whitening the frosty pane; the lights removed,
(Save that tall candle in her hand sustained
By others,) she descried it: 'Ah!' she said,
'Thank God! another day!' Then, noting one
Who near her knelt, she said, 'The night is sped,
And you have had no sleep; alas! I thought
Ere midnight I should die.' Her eyelids closed;
Into a sleep as quiet as a babe's
Gradual she sank; and while the ascending sun
Shot 'gainst the western hill his earliest beam,
In sleep, without a sigh, her spirit passed.
I would you could have seen her face in death!
I would you could have heard that last dread rite,
The mighty Mother's, o'er the stormy gulf
And all the moanings of the unknown abyss
Flinging victorious anthems, or the strength
Of piercing prayer: 'Oh! ye at least, my friends,
Have pity on me! plead for me with God!'
That Rite complete, the dark procession wound
Interminably through the fields and farms,
While wailing like a midnight wind, the *keen*

Expired o'er moor and heath. At eve we reached
The graveyard; slowly, as to-day, the sun
Behind a tomb-like bank of leaden cloud
Dropt while the coffin sank, and died away
The latest Miserere——
More than once
I would have ceased; but he, my friend and guest,
Or touched or courteous, willed me to proceed.
Perhaps that tale the wild scene harmonized
By sympathy occult; perhaps it touched him,
Contrasting with his recent life—with England,
With Oxford, long his home; its ordered pomp;
Its intermingled groves, and fields, and spires,
Its bridges spanning waters calm and clear;
The frequentation of its courts; its chimes;
Its sunset towers, and strangely youthful gardens
That breathe the ardours of the budding year
On the hoar breadth of grove-like cloisters old,
Chapels, and libraries, and statued halls,
England's still saintly City! Time has there
A stone tradition built like that all round
Woven by the inviolate hedges, where the bird
Her nest has made and warbled to her young,
May after May secure, since the third Edward
Held his last tournament, and Chaucer sang
To Blanche and to Philippa lays of love—
Not like Iernian records. Sad we rose,
That tale complete; and, after silence long,
As homeward through the braided forest-skirt
We trod the moonlight-spotted rocks, my friend
Resumed, with pregnant matter oft more just
In thought than application; but his voice
Was softer than it used to be. At last,
After our home attained, we turned, and lo!

With festal fires the hills were lit! Thine eve,
Saint John, had come once more; and for thy sake,
As though but yesterday thy crown were won,
Amid their ruinous realm uncomforted
The Irish people triumphed. Gloomy lay
The intermediate space: thence brightlier burned
The circling fires beyond it. 'Lo!' said I,
'Man's life as viewed by Ireland's sons; a vale
With many a pitfall throng'd, and shade, and briar,
Yet over-blown by angel-haunted airs,
And by the Light Eternal girdled round.'
Brief supper passed, within the porch we sat
As fire by fire burned low. We spake; were mute;
Resumed; but our discourse was gently toned,
Touched by a spirit from that wind-beaten grave,
Which breathed among its pauses, as of old
That converse Bede records, when by the sea,
'Twixt Tyne and Wear, facing toward Lindisfarne,
Saxon Ceolfrid and his Irish guest,
Evangelist from old Iona's isle,
'Mid the half Pagan land in cloisters dim
Discuss'd the Tonsure, and the Paschal time,
Sole themes whereon, in sacred doctrine one,
They differed; but discussed them in such sort
That mutual reverence deeper grew. We heard
The bridgeless brook that sang far off, and sang
Alone: for not among us builds that bird
Which changes light to music, haply ill-pleased
That Ireland bears not yet, in song's domain
To Spenser worthy fruit. Our beds at last,
Wearied, yet glad, we sought. Ere long the wind,
Gathering its manifold voices and the might
Of all its wills in valleys far, and rolled
From wood to wood o'er ridge and ravine, woke

Those Spectres which o'erhang my sleep in storm,
A hundred hills to me by sound well known,
That stand dark clustered in the night, and bend
With rainy skirt o'er lake and prone morass,
Or by sea-bays leaned out procumbent brows,
Waiting the rising sun.
At morn we met
Once more, my friend and I. The evening's glow
Had from his feelings passed: in their old channels
They flowed, scarce tinged. But still his thoughts retained
The trace of late impressions quaintly linked
With kindred thought-notes earlier. Half his mind
Scholastic was; his fancy deep; the age
Alone had stamped him modern. Much he spake
Of England wise and wealthy—now no more,
He said, 'a haughty nation proud in arms,'
Nor, as in Saxon times, a crownèd child
Propped 'against the Church's knee; but ocean's Queen,
Spanning the world with golden zone twin-clasped
By Commerce and by Freedom! But no less
Of pride and suffering spake he, and that frown
Sun-pressed on brows once pure. Of Ireland next:—
'How strange a race, more apt to fly than walk;
Soaring yet slight; missing the good things round them,
Yet ever out of ashes raking gems;
In instincts loyal, yet respecting law
Far less than usage: changeful, yet unchanged!
Timid, yet enterprising: frank, yet secret:
Untruthful oft in speech, yet living truth,
And Truth in things divine to life preferring:—

Scarce men; yet possible angels! "Isle of Saints!"
Such doubtless was your land—again it might be—
Strong, prosperous, manly never! ye are Greeks
In intellect, and Hebrews in the soul:
The solid Roman heart, the corporate strength
Is England's dower!' 'Unequally if so,'
I said, 'in your esteem the Isles are matched:—
They live in distant ages, alien climes;
Native they are to diverse elements:
Our swan walks awkwardly upon dry land;
Your boasted strength in spiritual needs so helps you
As armour helps the knight who swims a flood.'
He laughed. 'At least no siren streams for us,
Nor holy wells! We love "the fat of the land,"
Meads such as Rubens painted! Strange our fates!
Our feast is still the feast of fox and stork,
The platter broad, and amphora long-necked;—
Ill sorted yoke-mates truly. Strength, meanwhile,
Lords it o'er weakness!' 'Never yet,' I answered,
'Was husband vassal to an intricate wife
But roared he ruled her;' ere his smile had ceased,
Continuing thus:—'Ay! strength o'er weakness rules!
Strength hath in this no choice. But what is Strength?
Two Strengths there are. Club-lifting Hercules,
A mountained mass of gnarled and knotted sinews,
How shows he near the intense, Phœbean Might
That, godlike, spurns the ostent of thews o'er-grown;
That sees far off the victory fixed and sure,
And, without effort, wings the divine death
Like light, into the Python's heart? My friend,

Justice is strength; union on justice built;—
Good-will is strength—kind words—silence—that truth
Which hurls no random charge. Your scribes long time
Blow on our island like a scythèd wind:
The good they see not, nor the cause of ill;
They tear the bandage from the wound half-healed:—
Is not such onset weakness? Were it better,
Tell me, free-trader staunch, for sister Nations
To make exchange for aye of scorn for scorn,
Or blend the nobler powers and aims of each,
Diverse, and for that cause correlative,
True commerce, noblest, holiest, frankest, best,
And breed at last some destiny to God
Glorious, and kind to man?—If torn apart
One must her empire lose, and one her all.'

Thus as we spake, the hall clock vast and old,
A waif from Spain's Armada, chimed eleven:
And from the stables drew a long-hair'd boy
Who led a horse as shaggy as a dog,
A splenetic child of thistles and hill blast,
Rock-ribbed, and rich in craft of every race
From weasel to the beast that feigns to die.
Mounting—alas! that friends should ever part,—
My guest bade thus adieu: 'For good or ill
Our lands are linked.' And I rejoined, 'For which?
This shall you answer when, your pledge fulfilled,
Before the swallow you return, and meet
The unblown Spring in our barbaric vale.'

1860.

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NOTES.

Page 104. *The Infant Bridal.*

In the Middle Ages the marriage of children was no infrequent mode of reconciling nations. The custom was natural in a time when belief insisted on expressing itself in symbols, and when the whole of earthly life was regarded as a rehearsal of, and betrothal to, a Life Divine.

Page 144. *To a just Lawyer.*

This sonnet was addressed to my dear early friend, Edward O'Brien, on the publication of his work, 'The Lawyer,' (Pickering.)

I have observed in these poems several passages in which, either through an accidental coincidence, or in consequence of unconscious recollection, there exists a resemblance to thoughts expressed by other poets. In indicating such passages, so far as I have detected them, I have the satisfaction of referring my younger readers to poetry better than mine, and poetry which some of them may have not seen, or may have forgotten. They are as follows :—

Page 45. *The wingèd pines in panic sweep.*

Steer swiftly hither, ye winged pines.—*Old Song.*

Page 79.

Fresh leaves
Gladden the forest; but no second life
Invests our branches.

This image is familiar to the reader of the Greek poets.

Page 206. *Yet dim that eye with gazing upon heaven.*

Eyes grown dim by gazing on the pilot-stars.
ALFRED TENNYSON.

Page 210. *So shall wise suffering make you wise.*

Where Sorrow's held intrusive, or turned out,
There Wisdom will not enter, nor true Power,
Nor ought that dignifies Humanity.
SIR HENRY TAYLOR, *Philip van Artevelde.*

Page 238.

The anemonies in dubious light
Are trembling like a bridal veil.

This image will be found in Father Faber's beautiful poem of *Sir Launcelot.*

THE END.

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The search after Pro-
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